

26 Israelis killed in Lebanon in one year

TYRE (AFP) — At least 26 Israeli soldiers have been killed in South Lebanon since the Jewish state's offensive against Hizbollah guerrillas in the region in April 1996, security sources said Friday. Attacks against the Israeli-occupied "security zone" in South Lebanon, mainly by Hizbollah, have also killed 13 members of the Israeli-backed South Lebanon Army (SLA) militia, said the sources. At least 83 Israeli soldiers have been injured in the attacks along with 34 members of the SLA. The Islamic Resistance, Hizbollah's military wing, has launched 383 attacks on the buffer strip since last April's Israeli offensive, according to the security service toll. A total of 24 Hizbollah fighters were killed in the attacks, it added. Israeli shelling in response to Hizbollah attacks killed three Lebanese civilians and wounded 36 others during the same period.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية مستقلة عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية والرأي

Volume 22 Number 6496

AMMAN SATURDAY, APRIL 5, 1997, DHU'L QADEH 27, 1417

Price: Jordan 200 Fils

Netanyahu, summoned to U.S., offers Camp David-style accelerated talks

Palestinians continue protests as PNA and Israel reiterate positions ahead of Israeli-U.S. meeting

Combined agency dispatches

ISRAEL'S BENYAMIN Netanyahu, facing a peace crisis and West Bank clashes, offered on Friday to meet U.S. and Palestinian leaders for three-way Camp David-style talks if necessary to forge a final peace deal.

"As soon as violence against us stops, we can clear up all outstanding questions in six months," Mr. Netanyahu said in an interview with German television from Israel ahead of a crisis meeting with President Bill Clinton at the White House on Monday.

If that proved impossible within the time span, he could meet Mr. Clinton and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat in "a sort of new Camp David summit," along the lines of the 1978 negotiations which led to an Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty the following year, he told ARD Television.

But the Palestinian side has shown little enthusiasm for accelerated negotiations, which could equally be a recipe for swift disaster if they are deadlocked.

Both sides, it appeared Friday, are trying to barter their positions before Monday's meeting.

On Thursday, Israeli media suggested Mr. Clinton might seek a compromise from Mr. Netanyahu — a freeze on Jewish settlement activity in exchange for adoption of Israel's proposal to speed up negotiations for a permanent peace agreement.

Channel Two TV said Mr. Netanyahu was likely to tell Mr. Clinton that there would be something to talk about only after the Palestinians stopped the violence.

"We will not surrender to terrorism or threats," Mr. Netanyahu told supporters in Tel Aviv.

He said Israel would continue to build in Arab East Jerusalem and would not bargain with the Palestinians in spite of attacks on Israelis like the suicide bombing of a Tel Aviv cafe last month.

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said Friday she had expressed concern to the Israeli government about plans for new Jewish settlements in the West Bank.

Ms. Albright said she raised the topic in discussions Thursday with Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai who last week reportedly approved plans for dozens of new Jewish settlements.

"I expressed my concern to Mr. Mordechai about the thickening of settlements," Ms. Albright said at the outset of a meeting with Norwegian Foreign Minister Bjorn Tore Godal.

"We are in the process of trying very hard to get the peace process back on track," she added.

"It is a very delicate moment... It is very important that we do everything to rebuild the bonds of confidence."

"It is not the time for this kind of initiative to be taken," a senior U.S. official said of the decision to expand settlements.



A Palestinian boy is chased by a policeman as the Palestinian security force intervene to stop demonstrators from throwing stones at Israeli soldiers guarding Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem on Friday (AFP photo)

Stone-throwing Palestinians continue protests in W. Bank

HEBRON (Agencies) — Israeli troops battled stone-throwing Palestinian protesters in Hebron on Friday as weeks of West Bank rage over Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem showed no sign of easing, witnesses said.

They said more than 400 Palestinian youths rained stones on Israeli troops at the confrontation line dividing Hebron into Israeli and Palestinian sectors.

Soldiers responded with tear-gas and rubber-coated metal bullets.

Hebron's Alia hospital said 16 Palestinians were treated for rubber bullet injuries.

Fresh clashes also erupted in Bethlehem. Palestinian stone-throwers hurled stones at Israeli troops who fired rubber bullets.

There have been daily clashes in the West Bank — along with three Palestinian suicide bombings — since Israel began construction last month of a Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem.

Israeli undercover troops arrested a nine-member squad of the Islamic militant Hamas group this week, the Yediot Ahronot daily reported Friday.

The militants were caught in the Hebron area and were plotting to carry out attacks in Israel, the report said.

The Israeli army did not confirm or deny the report.

"Since the attack at Apropos cafe in Tel Aviv, there have been 42 arrests in the Hebron area. The detainees were passed to security forces," an army spokesman said when asked about the report.

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, meanwhile, told the U.S. consul general in Jerusalem, Edward Abington, that he was not ready to resume security cooperation with Israel unless the peace talks resumed.

Mr. Abington said Friday such a request was made by a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) official who also met with the Palestinian leader. In the past, Palestinian police were often instrumental in preventing attacks.

Still, the Palestinian attorney general, Khaled Kidreh, said dozens of suspected militants have been arrested since two followers of the Islamic Jihad group blew themselves up outside two Jewish settlements Tuesday in bungled suicide bombings.

Witnesses said Palestinian police commanders dispatched a rapid reaction force, a special unit found only in Hebron, to disperse the protesters. Palestinian National Authority (PNA) troops, waving short iron clubs, pressed rioters back.

Near self-ruled Nablus, Palestinian villagers sawed down some two dozen wooden lighting poles near the Jewish settlement of Eli and set several of them alight in protest against a new perimeter road they said settlers built on confiscated land.

"This was a protest against confiscation of land for the settlement and the people cut the lights," Ahmad Abu Rad told Reuters.

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King to undergo prostate surgery and meet Israeli premier at Mayo Clinic

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — His Majesty King Hussein will be hospitalized Saturday in Minnesota for surgery to remove an enlarged portion of his prostate and will remain hospitalized for two or three days, according to a statement from the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota.

Reports also said that the King will meet with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Minnesota in what was seen as a bid to break the deadlock in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

The King meanwhile wound up an official visit to Washington where he held talks with President Bill Clinton and senior administration officials.

The Mayo Clinic said in a statement on the King's expected hospitalization:

"He will have surgery to remove a portion of his prostate gland which has become enlarged and is causing him some difficulties in urinating."

King Hussein, 61, has been a regular visitor to the Mayo Clinic since he underwent successful cancer surgery at the prestigious midwest facility in August 1992.

The expected prostate surgery was announced on March 23 following a series of routine tests the monarch underwent at the medical centre.

Those tests also turned up no traces of cancer.

"Four and a half years after King Hussein's operation following the discov-



King Hussein of Jordan

ery of cancerous cells, all medical examinations have declared him completely cured and no trace of cancerous cells has been found," Samir Farraj, the King's personal physician, said last month.

The tests showed that the King is in "excellent health," the doctor said.

The prostate surgery is considered minor and has been described by Dr. Farraj as "normal" for a man of his age.

"There should be a fairly fast recovery," said Michael O'Hara, spokesman for the clinic. "He will still be confined to his hospital room but he should be up and walking."

In October, the King had a medical checkup at the clinic after participating in a Middle East summit with Mr. Clinton, Mr. Netanyahu and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

On Thursday King Hussein met in Washington

with William Cohen, the U.S. secretary of defence at the Pentagon where they discussed the peace process, Jordan's position and the fulfilment of the peace accords between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

Discussion also covered Jordan-U.S. cooperation in defence fields and U.S. supply of military equipment to the Kingdom and military training programmes.

The meeting was attended by Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, Royal Court Chief Awn Khasawneh and the other members of the Jordanian delegation accompanying the King on his current visit to the U.S.

Later the King told reporters that the discussions were designed to further bolster Jordanian-U.S. relations, noting that Jordan and the U.S. maintain excellent relations in upholding the same principles and serving to achieve common objectives for the Middle East.

The King said that the U.S. acts as an honest broker for the Middle East peace process and its efforts are appreciated in helping the countries of the region overcome difficulties to move ahead towards a comprehensive peace.

In reply to a question about the attitude of the Israeli prime minister the King said that Mr. Netanyahu was elected by the Israeli people as their prime minister and he intended to work with him for peace.

Israeli majority supports Palestinian state

The Jerusalem Post

A MAJORITY of Jewish Israelis support the establishment of a Palestinian state, a Tel Aviv University survey found. The poll also indicated an even larger majority believe the chances of another Arab-Israeli war are very high.

Asked whether they support the establishment of a Palestinian state, if this would remove the main obstacle to real peace between Israel and the Palestinians, 51.3 per cent said yes, 44.2 per cent said no, and 4.5 per cent were non-committal.

The telephone poll of 503 Jewish adults, conducted on Sunday, has a margin of error of four per cent.

Other results show an eight per cent drop in that the peace process will bear fruit, and a six per cent decrease in those who support the Oslo process (from 54.1 per cent to 48.0 per cent).

Some 36 per cent said they do not believe there is a strong probability of war between Israel and the Arabs, while 59 per cent said the chances are very high.

Seventy-four per cent said they are concerned about the possibility that they or their families could become victims of "terrorist" attacks, while 26 per cent are not worried. Most respondents (73.5 per cent) believe the Palestinian leadership is not doing enough to stop "terror."

Police seize Netanyahu phone records

TEL AVIV (AP) — Police took phone records from the office of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as part of an investigation into an alleged influence-trading scandal involving senior government officials, a newspaper said Friday.

Police took printouts of telephone numbers dialed from the prime ministry, apparently to see whether there were contacts between Mr. Netanyahu and others connected to the affair, the Yediot Ahronot daily reported.

Netanyahu spokesman Shai Bazak said he did not know whether any records had been taken. Police refused comment. The investigation began in mid-January, after Israel Television reported that senior officials in Mr. Netanyahu's office conspired with the leader of the religious Shas

No breakthrough in Peru hostage crisis, but progress is expected

LIMA (Agencies) — President Alberto Fujimori, his efforts to end Peru's 108-day hostage crisis at an impasse, travelled to neighbouring Bolivia on Friday for talks on the standoff with Bolivian President Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada.

Mr. Fujimori was to give Mr. Sanchez de Lozada a briefing on the progress — or lack of progress — in talks to free the 72 hostages held by leftist guerrillas, officials said.

Bolivia's ambassador to Peru, Jorge Gumucio, is one of the men held since mid-December by Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) rebels at the Japanese ambassador's house.

Bolivia has four MRTA militants in its jails, and MRTA is demanding freedom for those comrades in exchange for Mr. Gumucio's release.

Mr. Fujimori's 24-hour visit to Bolivia, a nation with close ethnic and historical ties to Peru, comes at a time when talks to free

the hostages have been shrouded in secrecy.

"We are moving forward in the conversations. I don't have much more than that to tell you," said a mediator, Archbishop Juan Luis Cipriani, late on Thursday.

Mr. Cipriani and another member of a three-man mediation team, Canadian Ambassador Anthony Vincent, visited the mansion for a couple of hours on Thursday for talks with MRTA commander Nestor Cerpa, local television reported.

Visits by the mediators have become an almost daily occurrence, and lately Mr. Cipriani has spoken in a tired, frustrated tone to describe them. There is no date for a resumption of direct talks between the rebels and the government, broken off on March 12.

Canada's foreign minister said on Friday in Tokyo he saw no early solution to the hostage standoff, but underscored his government's willingness to help

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No excuse for human rights abuse by Israel and PNA — Amnesty

AMMAN (J.T.) — The human rights situation in the territories under the control of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) will remain fragile if the international community continues to accept human rights abuses in the name of fighting terrorism, Amnesty International said in a press release Thursday on the return of its delegates from the area.

While there has been an improvement in human rights practices in PNA controlled territories since the end of last year, the danger of continuing abuses cannot be underestimated, the organisation said.

The press release said: It is imperative that the international community does not condone or encourage the PNA to allow arbitrary political detention without trial, or flagrantly unfair trials before the State Security Court under the guise of fighting terrorism.

The Amnesty International delegates, who have just returned from their visit to the area under the PNA, were not able to meet officials of the Israeli government in order to raise the organisation's concerns including the use of torture, administrative detention, and unlawful use of lethal force. A request to visit Megiddo Prison in Israel to see a number of Palestinian administrative detainees held for years without trial was refused by the Israeli Ministry of Defence.

The delegates visited Bir Zeit University Human Rights Action Project on March 29 just two hours before a student of the university, "Abdullah Khalil Salah, was killed apparently by live ammunition fired by Israeli soldiers during a demonstration south of Ramallah. Amnesty International expressed concern that the deaths of "Abdullah Khalil Salah, and two other

Palestinians killed on April 1, appeared to be a result of unlawful use of lethal force and called for an investigation into these deaths.

Scores of Palestinians have been wounded by rubber bullets and some by live ammunition fired by the Israeli security forces over the past two weeks of stone-throwing demonstrations against the Israeli government's authorisation to build a Jewish settlement in East Jerusalem. Amnesty International urges the Israeli government to respect United Nations standards which state that firearms should only be used in self-defence or defence against imminent danger.

In relation to the PNA, there has been pressure, especially from Israel and the USA, for the PNA to arrest terrorists. This has been particularly the case after the recent suicide bombings including one which killed three civilians in Tel Aviv in March.

Every authority has a right and duty to arrest perpetrators of violent crimes. This duty, however, should not be translated — as it was last year — into arbitrary arrest, torture and prolonged detention without charge or trial of political opponents of the peace process, Amnesty International said.

The Amnesty International delegates did, however, note the recent improvements in the human rights situation in the PNA. President Arafat, had according to PNA officials, issued directives against violence and drawn up new regulations defining the precise areas of work of PNA security services and forbidding anyone but the police to interrogate common law detainees. The delegates were also assured that those arrested for non-political offences had immediate access to their families.

Despite these positive assurances, we have still not been given guarantees that the PNA would allow families and lawyers prompt access after arrest to political detainees or that grossly unfair trials before the State Security Courts would end, Amnesty International said.

Part of the changed human rights atmosphere in the PNA is said to have come over the past two months from the shock at the death after torture at the hands of PNA military intelligence (istikhbarat) of 35-year-old Yousef Al Baba on Feb. 1. The death was vigorously condemned by Frieih Abu Middein, the PNA Minister of Justice and other officials.

But in January, only one week before Yousef Al Baba's death, the head of the istikhbarat had told an Amnesty International delegation that they would never use torture as it was "primitive."

Actions speak louder than words — it is essential that the trial of those under arrest on suspicion of involvement in the incomunicado detention and death of Yousef Al Baba be fair and open rather than a cover-up of the truth in a secret or summary trial before the State Security Courts, Amnesty International said.

We welcome improvements, such as the access to prisons given to the International Committee of the Red Cross as well as the clear desire of many officials of the PNA to ensure respect for the rule of law. But we regard immediate access to families and lawyers for all those arrested as one of the key necessities to end secret detention and torture which has played a part in the death of 11 Palestinians over the past 33 months.



An Egyptian policeman shoots dead a stray dog in a Cairo suburb on Thursday as part of a campaign to track down a mysterious wolf-like creature that mauled 23 people and has been terrorising residents since Sunday. A postmortem on one such animal dubbed 'She-Wolf' showed that it is a cross between a dog and a wolf. Police have been on the alert for sighting of the beast and instructed to shoot to kill any stray dogs or such animals (AFP photo)

Turkish deputies may lose immunity in scandal probe

ANKARA (AFP) — A parliamentary commission of enquiry into state links with the mafia has called for the lifting of parliamentary immunity on two Turkish deputies of the True Path Party, political sources said Friday.

The commission presented its report into the alleged mafia scandal overnight to the presidency of the Turkish parliament. It accuses former Interior Minister Mehmet Agar and Sedat Bucak, a deputy of Kurdish origin, of having links with a suspected "gang within the state."

The scandal broke in November, when a car that was carrying Mr. Bucak, plus a well-known mafia boss and a high ranking police officer, crashed. Bucak was the only survivor of the accident. The commission

report says the trio were on their way to Istanbul to carry out "an armed criminal act."

Weapons, some of them belonging to the state, were found in the car along with forged documents alleged to have been supplied by Mr. Agar, who has since been forced to resign.

The report also underlines the "need to investigate" allegations of links between Foreign Minister Tansu Ciller and the "gang," which is said to be implicated in drug trafficking. The commission had summoned Ciller in early March, but was forced to abandon the hearing when it came under pressure from the Islamic-right-wing coalition government, of which Ciller's True Path Party is a member.

Lebanon's first municipal elections since the war postponed indefinitely

BEIRUT (AP) — Lebanon's first municipal elections in 35 years have been postponed indefinitely, reportedly causing a rift among the country's top leaders.

The elections in June were to choose municipal councils and mayors. They were seen as a further sign of rebuilding Lebanon's democracy, which was shattered by the 1975-90 civil war.

The decision came Thursday night when the government withdrew a draft law on the elections that was being considered by parliament.

President Elias Hrawi was quoted Friday as saying that he would not agree to the delay, which was supported by his prime minister.

"The credibility of the state is at stake. Holding these elections is a popular demand," the leftist Beirut newspaper Al Safir quoted Mr. Hrawi as saying.

The country's three top leaders were said to be at odds over the election procedure. Mr. Hrawi and Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri reportedly want the heads of municipal councils to be elected by members of these councils, while Prime Minister Rafik Hariri prefers

that they be elected directly by the people.

Another point of contention is whether or not a member of parliament can be nominated for municipal posts. Hariri is in favour, while Mr. Hrawi and Mr. Berri are said to be opposed.

Parliament supported Mr. Hariri's motion to withdraw the draft law, but he refused to say when a new one would be submitted.

"I do not want this to seem as if the government does not want the elections to be held on time, but it is better to withdraw the bill and study it again in order to see what we can do about it and what changes we can introduce," Mr. Hariri told parliament just before 54 deputies voted for the motion to withdraw the draft law.

Thirty-six deputies, including Interior Minister Michel Murr, voted against withdrawing the draft, which was submitted last week.

Mr. Hariri and his allies enjoy a majority in the 128-member legislature, which was elected last summer.

The last municipal polls were held in 1962. The first parliamentary elections in 20 years were held in 1992.

Islamic Action Front warns of 'conspiracy' against Arab Jerusalem

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Islamic Action Front (IAF) Friday warned of a major conspiracy being hatched against Jerusalem, orchestrated by the U.S. and Israel and backed by a number of parties in the region. A front statement said that following the use of veto by the U.S. to kill Security Council resolutions condemning Israel's practices in Palestine, plots are underway to cover-up for the Israeli construction of the new settlement at Jabal Abu Ghneim in Arab East Jerusalem and to pave the way for attaining a final solution for the city and the Palestinian lands favouring the Jewish state.

Charging that the Oslo accords signed by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) "constituted the most dangerous event after the creation of Israel in Palestine," the statement said that the ongoing measures which started with the opening of the tunnel at the Haram Al Sharif, and followed by the

agreement on Hebron which gave the Jews control of the Ibrahim Mosque and the building of the settlement at Jabal Abu Ghneim are bound to create new facts on the ground.

"The current flurry of activity in Washington, Tel Aviv and the Arab World give rise to apprehension of the coming stage, especially as the developments come in the wake of the Jerusalem Committee meeting in Morocco which proved important to deal with the situation," said the statement, adding that "neither the Palestinians nor the Arabs and Muslims seem to have any options now to stop the conspiracy on Jerusalem."

The statement warned that "the conspiracy cannot deceive the masses and the tampering with the Jerusalem question is bound to trigger a rising popular movement in the Arab and Islamic World to deal with the situation."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Jordanian beheaded in Saudi Arabia

RIYADH (AP) — A Jordanian man convicted of smuggling hashish and heroin was beheaded Friday, Mohammed Salman Al Howaiti was executed in the western city of Tabuk, the Ministry of Interior said. The ministry did not give his age or say when he was convicted of drug trafficking. His execution brings to 19 the number of people beheaded this year in Saudi Arabia. Last year, 71 people were beheaded. Saudi Arabian courts can impose the death penalty for convictions of murder, rape and drug trafficking.

Rostropovich to relaunch Baalbek festival

BEIRUT (AFP) — Cellist Mstislav Rostropovich will relaunch on July 30 the once famous Baalbek festival, which was stopped at the start of the 1975-1990 civil war, the organising committee said Friday. May Arida, a committee member, did not give details on the concert of the 70-year-old Russian cellist who gave an improvised concert at the Berlin Wall when it fell in November 1989. Lebanon decided in February to relaunch the Baalbek festival, set at the feet of the Roman temples of the ancient city. The festival, launched in 1956, drew international artists such as ballet dancers Rudolf Nureyev and Margot Fonteyn, conductor Herbert von Karajan, choreographer Maurice Bejart, Arab diva Om Kulsum and Lebanese singer Fairuz.

Former Egyptian interior minister dies

CAIRO (AFP) — Zaki Badr, Egypt's former interior minister notorious for his blunt talking and his harsh repression of militants, has died in the United States after an operation for liver cancer, newspapers reported on Friday. Badr, who was 71, began his career in the police force before his appointment in 1982 as governor of the trouble-hit southern province of Assiut. A crackdown on militants in Assiut earned Badr the post of interior minister in 1986, where he ruled his department with an iron fist until 1990. His tenure was marked by allegations of torture and poor conditions in Egyptian jails, as well as controversy over his outspoken attacks against political opponents which saw him refer to Iranian leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini as a "pig." Badr was married with three children. He died in a hospital in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania on Wednesday.

Barzani agrees to release captives

ANKARA (AP) — An Iraqi Kurdish group on Friday agreed to release captives from a rival faction in northern Iraq, apparently after being persuaded by a visiting U.S. delegation.

Massoud Barzani, leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), made the announcement after he met with two U.S. State Department officials, David Welch and Bob Deutsch, on Thursday, a statement said.

The State Department announced Thursday that the discussions focused on the Ankara peace process that was put in place by the United States, Turkey and Britain last autumn.

The release of the detainees, who belonged to a rival Kurdish group, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), was planned to start soon, the statement said.

Shazad Saib, a PUK representative here, said on Thursday that each side

was holding more than 100 detainees. The two sides fought for several months last year to gain power in northern Iraq.

Iraqi Kurds maintain a de-facto autonomous state in northern Iraq under the protection of a U.S.-led allied mission.

On Thursday, Iraq branded the U.S. delegation's visit as an act of aggression and interference in its internal affairs.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

14:05 Cartoon — Mickey & Donald Adventures
14:30 Cartoon — Moonin
15:00 French Programmes
16:00 Giltene World Sport
16:30 Doc. — Innovations
17:00 Tilt
17:25 Drama — Blue Heelers
18:00 French Programmes
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — Hangin' With Mr. Cooper
20:00 Doc. — Magazine-01
20:30 Prison
21:10 Science Fiction — "Time Trav"
22:00 News in English
22:25 MacGyver
23:15 Feature Film — "Seventh Floor"

PRAYER TIMES

04:56 Fajr
06:15 (Sunrise) Duha
12:38 Dhuhur
16:12 'Asr
19:01 Maghreb
20:01 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swaffeh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church Tel. 661656
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366
Church of the Annunciation

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Tel. 623541
Anglican Church Tel. 652826
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751
Armenian International Church Tel. 827126
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 624328
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
English-speaking
Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
Skies will be partly cloudy, temperatures slightly below average, and winds westerly to northwesterly moderate to active. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Min/Max temp.

Amman05/16
Aqaba13/25
Deserts04/18
Jordan Valley11/24
Yesterday's high temperatures:

Amman 17 Aqaba 26 Humidity readings: Amman 29 per cent, Aqaba 28 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Khalil Al Tushuk757253
Dr. Bahjat Bader832642
Dr. Nasser Ibrahim830432
Dr. Wafiq Qaddumi893342
Firas pharmacy661912
Ferdous pharmacy778336
Al Asenu pharmacy637059
Nairokh pharmacy623672
Al Salam pharmacy636730
Yacoub pharmacy644945
Shmeisani pharmacy637660
Najbi pharmacy847632
IRBID:
Dr. Ghazi Ta'anneh250080
Al Quds pharmacy(—)
ZARQA:
Dr. Tareq Hijawi985445
Khalifeh pharmacy985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre637111
Civil Defence Department661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue630341
Civil Defence Emergency199
Rescue Police 192621111
637777
Fire Brigade617101
Blood Bank775121
Highway Police843402

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre313813/32
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn642816
Alkileh Maternity, J. Amn642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity642362
Malhas, J. Amman636140

Traffic Police

896390

Public Security Department

630321
Hotel Complaints665800
Price Complaints661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints897467
Amman Municipality Complaints787111
Telephone Information (direct telephone assistance)121
Overseas Calls010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs661101
Jordan Television773111
Radio Jordan774111
Jordan Electricity Authority680100
Water Authority680100
Jordan Electricity Authority815615
Electric Power Company636381
RJ Flight Information 08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

PALESTINE, SHMEISANI

607071
Shmeisani Hospital669131
University Hospital845845
Al-Muasher Hospital662279
The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen77101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh775111/26
Army, Marka891611/5
Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50
Amal Hospital674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery865199
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital09/983323
Zarqa National Hospital09/900560
Ibn Sina Hospital09/986732
Al Hikam Modern Hospital09/990990
IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital02/275555
Greek Catholic Hospital02/272275
Ibn Al Nafies Hospital02/247100

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

09:25 Aqaba (add) (RJ)
09:55 Damascus (RJ)
10:50 Karachi, Dubai (RJ)
10:30 New Delhi (RJ)
11:05 Beirut (RJ)
11:30 Colombo (RJ)
13:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
15:40 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
16:55 London (RJ)
17:20 Cairo (RJ)
23:10 Vienna, Berlin (RJ)
23:59 Paris (RJ)
00:35 Larnaca (RJ)
01:05 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
06:00 Bangkok (RJ)

Other Flights

06:10 Jakarta (GA)
07:05 London, Damascus (BA)
13:00 Riyadh (SV)
13:10 Muscat, Abu Dhabi (GF)
15:05 Vienna (OS)
19:15 Dubai, Damascus (EK)
20:10 London (GA)
21:10 Paris, Damascus (AF)
23:25 Beirut (ME)
23:45 Amsterdam (KL)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

06:30 Aqaba (add) (RJ)
07:20 Beirut (RJ)
08:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
12:05 Vienna (RJ)
12:35 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
12:45 Paris (RJ)
13:00 Geneva, Brussels (RJ)
13:15 Cairo (RJ)
13:30 Madrid (RJ)
14:00 London (RJ)
19:30 Jeddah (RJ)
21:00 Paris (add) (RJ)
21:15 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
21:20 Larnaca (RJ)
21:50 Bombay (RJ)
00:40 Riyadh, Dhahran (RJ)
01:30 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
02:00 Aqaba, Paris (RJ)

Other Flights

04:00 Rome (AZ)
06:50 Larnaca (CY)
07:10 London (GA)
08:10 Damascus, London (BA)
14:00 Abu Dhabi, Bahrain (GF)
14:30 Riyadh (SV)
15:50 Vienna (OS)
20:15 Dubai (EK)
21:10 Jakarta (GA)
23:55 Damascus, Paris (AF)
00:25 Amsterdam (KL)
02:00 Cairo (MS)

HIJAZ RAILWAY TRAIN

Dep. Amman 8:00 a.m. every Monday
Arr. Damascus 5:00 p.m. every Monday
Dep. Damascus 7:30 a.m. every Sunday
Arr. Amman 5:00 p.m. every Sunday

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fils per kg.

Apple700/500
Banana600/600
Banana (imported)980/600
Cabbage130/80
Carrot200/120
Cauliflower200/100
Cucumber (large)230/160
Cucumber (small)350/200
Eggplant230/100
Garlic1550/600
Grape fruit180/120
Lemon550/250
Marrow (large)220/130
Marrow (small)380/200
Onion (green)220/180
Onion (dry)380/180
Orange560/300
Peas800/650
Pepper (hot)650/350
Pepper (sweet)650/350
Potato370/200
Radish150/60
Spinach240/150
String beans1050/700
Tomato420/220

Princess, Palestinian minister discuss status of women in Palestine, Jordan

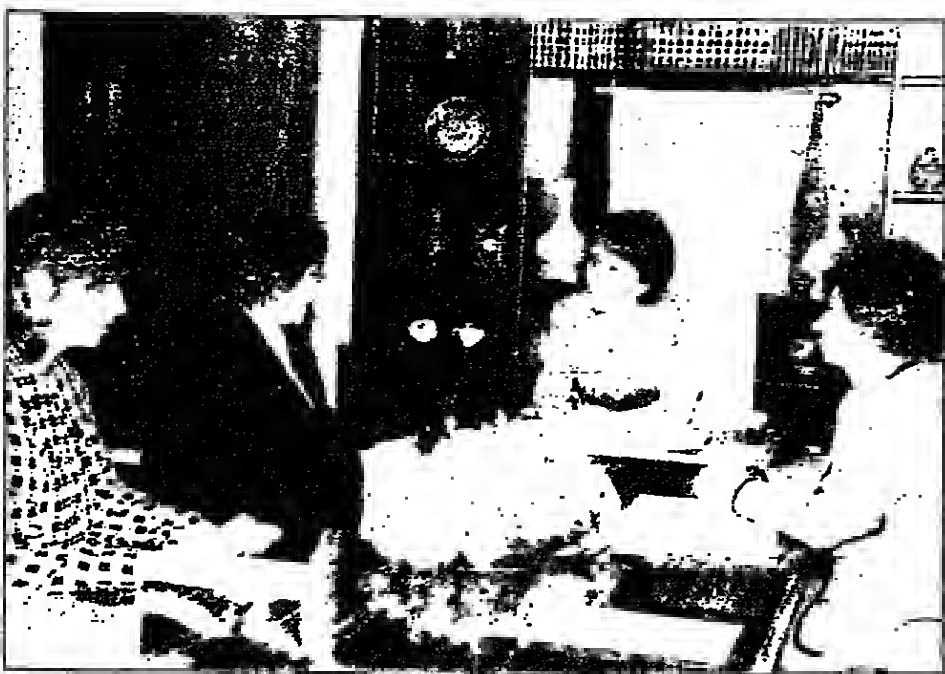
AMMAN (J.T.) — HRH Princess Basma Thursday received Palestinian Minister of Social Welfare Intisar Wazir and the two reviewed the situation of Jordanian and Palestinian women, means of advancing their status and enhancing their participation in public life while serving their people's causes.

The meeting covered the condition of Palestinian women under Israeli occupation and their suffering as well as Israeli attempts to Judaize the Arab city of Jerusalem.

The Princess stressed Jordanian support for Palestinian women who, she said, are suffering as a result of the disruption of the peace process.

She emphasised the importance of peace for advancing women's status, easing their suffering and empowering them to play their full role in national development.

The Princess stated her hope that the peace process would be restored



Princess Basma and visiting Palestinian Minister of Social Welfare Intisar Wazir are seen in a meeting, surrounded by staff members. They are accompanied by the director of Ms. Wazir's office and the coordinator of the Jordanian Women's NGO Committee (Petra photo)

so that all might live in peace and enjoy the benefits thereof. Ms. Wazir thanked Princess Basma for her "unwavering support" of

Palestinian women and highlighted the importance of enhancing cooperation between Jordanian and Palestinian women.

The meeting was attended by the director of Ms. Wazir's office and the coordinator of the Jordanian Women's NGO Committee.

Doctors vote in JMA elections

By Lola Keilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Approximately 4,100 doctors headed to the voting polls yesterday to elect the president and council members of the Jordanian Medical Association (JMA) in its next two-year term.

The votes were distributed in four governorates and between four presidential candidates.

These represent two political forces as well as independent candidates. They will also determine the members of the 10-seat council for which 30 doctors have been nominated.

In the run for this year's presidency, are incumbent President and Islamist Bassem Dajani, Arab Nationalist Mohammed Oran and Khalil Barakat and Mohammad Zu'bi, both independent.

The fiercest competition, over the presidential seat, according to analysts, is between Dr. Dajani and Dr. Oran.

Last week, Islamists and Nasserites at the JMA, after having previously broken their alliance, announced that all differences between the two parties have been resolved, according to Dr. Dajani.

As an example, Nasserite representative Ahmad Armouti who ran on the Islamists list in the 1995 JMA elections, was also on this year's Islamists list.

Dr. Dajani told the Jordan Times that the decision was taken as an important step in "reorganising the election campaign."

The Islamist list, headed by Dr. Dajani, includes: Nasserite Ahmad Armouti, Islamist Nazeem Abubneh, Islamists seen as close to the IAF Nabil Muhiar and Mazen Kurdyeh and independents Khaleel Mu'idi and Bassam Kiswani.

The list kept four seats vacant out of the ten-member seat list.

The Islamists have been in virtual control of the association for the past six years, when former Islamist Dr. Ishaq Marayit was the first Islamist to win the presidency and served two terms.

To oppose Dr. Dajani's Islamist list, a group headed by Dr. Oran, the secretary general of the Arab Land Party, representing leftists, Arab nationalists, and independent doctors has been formed.

This group, which calls itself "the Professional List (PL)" will pose the greatest challenge for the Islamists list.

According to Dr. Oran, the PL is more of a professional than a political list. He stated that no one political movement overshadows the rest.

Doctors nominated to run on the Professional List are as follows: independent Salim Sinadi, Jamal Yaghmour, Mohammed Abadeh, Nasser Shomaily, Hani Hadadin, leftists Ra'f Faris, Mohammed Bataineh, Hassan Hadad and Omar Abu Laban.

A third, independent seven-member list, which includes public sector doctors is also in the running.

The list includes candidates only running for the council who are: Notan Many, Ali Hnati and Fayaz

Rifaa, Mohammed Zuboun, Hisham Jughul, Hussein Abu Samean and Zakaria Omari.

"Members running on the list were elected in their sub-governorates in the last election," Dr. Maaya told the Jordan Times. "They know the needs of their governorates and will work on transforming the health demands of the various governorates into action."

A fourth Baathists list, also ran for the ten-seat council. This list includes Youssef Mubasher, Adam Abdullat, Jafar Humiri, Abdul Rahim Hignawi and Hani Kadounah. The list does not have a presidential candidate.

However, sources close to this list and the third one informed the Jordan Times that supporters of the two lists might vote for Dr. Oran as their preferred presidential candidate.

As for West Bank representation, doctors in Jordan will be asked to vote for Hisham Ardah, who has already been elected as a council member in separate elections by physicians residing in the West Bank.

"Although we cannot force the decision on the doctors we have requested that all electors vote for Dr. Ardah," Dr. Dajani said.

Since 1968, nine of the executive council's 10 members have been elected by the general assembly in Amman.

The tenth member has, until now, been a representative of West Bank physicians and elected by the JMA Branch in Jerusalem.

The results of the elections will be announced today.

Princess addresses children's protection at RCA meeting

AMMAN (J.T.) — HRH Princess Rania Al Abdullah, president of the Jordan River for Development Projects, Wednesday spoke at a meeting of the Rotary Club of Amman Cosmopolitan (RCA).

RCA member and treasurer of the Jordan River for Development Projects (JRDP), Karim Kassar introduced HRH Princess Rania Al Abdullah and commended her "good example of leadership," according to an RCA statement.

The JRDP has procured hundreds of jobs for women to help them support their families, the statement said.

The Princess stated that she was grateful for the opportunity to help through the RCA.

"We all have a soft spot

for children," she said, "their misery sometimes forces us to turn away, but apathy does not help. Children are the most vulnerable of the community, they cannot defend themselves and most of them endure in silence."

The Princess enumerated statistics covering the number of child abuse cases and covered violence against children and school delinquency, the statement said. She explicated as to how injuries in the first three years of life could potentially stunt emotional control, social development and language skills.

The Princess suggested methods of remedying the situation such as identification of symptoms and prevention.

Families at risk, she added, include parents who,

themselves, suffered abuse, or those with a history of psychiatric disease.

Prenatal care and proper nurturing of babies is important as is early education, Princess Rania asserted.

The JRDP is currently developing a plan of action which includes updated child protection laws, the establishment of a special body to whom cases of abuse can be reported, national counselling centres, a Child Protection Unit (CPU) hot line to offer medical and legal advice with an affiliated home where children can be sheltered as well as family support services.

"The RCA can help raise community awareness, educate our children, volunteer to help in the centres, and maintain direct

contact with the children," the Princess concluded. "It can rally for community support and legislative action and assist financially...remember that children are the future."

President of the RCA Wael Karadshah presented the Princess with a donation of JD1,000 to assist the JRDP, the statement said.

The meeting was attended by District Governor Tawfiq Kassar, responsible for Rotary Clubs in Jordan, Egypt, Sudan, Lebanon and Cyprus. RCA Vice President and Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Akel Biltaji, Minister of Social Development Mohammad Manser, Ambassador of Pakistan Sarwar Naqvi and ambassador of Russia, Alexander Soltanov, both members of the RCA.

Committee appointed to coordinate participation in German exhibitions

AMMAN (J.T.) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali has appointed a high-level Jordanian National Committee for the Hannover Universal Exposition and the Jordanian Week in Germany.

According to an Institute of Diplomacy statement, the committee is chaired by Dr. Mazen Armouti, advisor to HRH Crown Prince Hassan and president of the Institute of Diplomacy as well as Jordan's commissioner general for the events.

Dr. Majali assigned two main tasks to the national committee, the first being to coordinate national

efforts of both private and public sectors related to Jordanian participation in the five-month German exposition in the year 2000 and to organise annual Jordanian weeks in Germany to begin next year, including conferences on Jordanian-German relations, the statement said.

The prime minister emphasised the need to guarantee elaborate and multidisciplinary presentations involving political, economic, cultural, scientific, tourist, artistic and environmental activities. These, he said, should be modelled after the successful Jordan Week in Japan in

1995, conferences on Jordanian-Japanese Relations, and Jordanian participation in the 1992 Seville Universal Exposition.

The forthcoming events are expected to be the biggest and most comprehensive and varied Jordanian activities abroad, the statement said.

Dr. Majali stated his hope that the Jordanian exhibitions in Germany would boost bilateral relations and strengthen ties as Germany is one of Jordan's most important economic partners, the statement said.

The prime minister opined that Jordan's participation in Expo 2000 would

bolster ties with the international community, enhance Jordan's image internationally and expose the Kingdom in what is expected to be the most elaborate event at the close of the century.

Dr. Majali's appointment came in response to German Chancellor Helmut Kohl's invitation in which he emphasised the importance of collaboration in "directing the world's attention to the global problems which will affect all peoples on this earth at the beginning of next century."

YMWA to open arts and crafts exposition

By Sacha Baggili
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — An arts and crafts exhibition to open here Sunday, will display the latest creations in weaving, ceramics and wood crafts produced by students from the Young Muslim Women's Association (YMWA) Centre for Special Education (CSE).

The fifth annual Arts and Crafts Exhibition, to be held under the patronage of HRH Princess Sarvath, president of the YMWA, will display these crafts for public sale in order to raise funds for the Centre for Special Education.

The centre, established by the YMWA in 1974, was instituted to serve the educational and training needs of young mentally handicapped members of society.

According to Silva Karmamandian, staff member at the CSE, through its activities the centre endeavours to ensure that the mentally handicapped are empowered to make a productive



HRH Princess Sarvath

contribution to society and considered as participating members of the community.

A brochure published by the YMWA states that the CSE "has sought to offer comprehensive services to children starting at an early age." To this purpose, children between the ages of three and seven can attend the preschool section

before entering primary school.

The pre-vocational section, from which students contributing to Sunday's exhibition belong, trains those between the ages of 16 and 19.

According to the YMWA, the pre-vocational section of the CSE "was originally designed to train students in horticulture, window

washing, domestic science and woodworking. Weaving and ceramics were added to the programme with the help of the government of Japan in 1989."

Under the umbrella of the YMWA, a non-profit, voluntary organisation, two other institutions function to accommodate the social and educational needs of the Jordanian society.

The Princess Sarvath Community College was founded in 1980 and offers training for young women so that they might be instructed on how to earn an independent livelihood.

Founded in 1987 in the wake of the success of the CSE, the YMWA Sheltered Workshop endeavours to provide employment for graduates of the centre, aiding them to "reach their full potential as productive members of society," the YMWA publication states.

The three-day exhibition will be formally opened Sunday by HRH Princess Sarvath at the Royal Cultural Centre.

Measles outbreaks recorded in some regions of Kingdom

AMMAN (Petra) — Several regions of Jordan have recently witnessed a noticeable increase in the number of measles cases among school-aged children, Dr. Saad Kharabshah, director of the ministry's disease control department, stated Friday.

The Ministry of Health is monitoring the outbreak carefully and the situation is under control, he added.

The director was responding to a Thursday report in the local press stating that 550 measles cases have appeared in the Jerash Governorate.

According to the report, the outbreak had started gradually in January and later increased in intensity.

The Ministry of Health was expecting the epidemic as outbreaks of the virus have occurred on a regular pattern in 1984, 1988 and 1993, Dr. Kharabshah said.

He added that the outbreaks, which normally used to occur among children aged from one to one and a half years, started to appear among older children but that mortality rates among those infected have diminished greatly.

In the 1980s, tens of thousands of Jordanian children contracted measles but due to wide-scale immunisation campaigns these rates have dropped greatly, he added.

The Ministry of Health is striving to eradicate both measles and polio by the year 2000 and therefore has undertaken a vaccination programme targeting children aged between 18 and 24 months, who are now given a support dose to that which they previously received at the age of nine months, Dr. Kharabshah said.

This programme is intended to ensure that by the year 2000 all schoolchildren have been immunised, he explained.

Regarding the ministry's current measures, Dr. Kharabshah maintained that medical teams have been visiting various districts where outbreaks were reported to administer vaccines to children aged from nine months to 15 years and that they continue to carefully monitor the results of the campaign.

Economic delegation arrives in Jordan from former Yugoslavia

AMMAN (Petra) — An economic delegation from the former Yugoslavia headed by their undersecretary of health, labour and social welfare Friday arrived from Baghdad for a three-day working visit to Jordan in order to enhance bilateral relations.

The delegation will hold talks with senior officials from the ministries of health and agriculture on means of enhancing bilateral cooperation in health and agricultural fields.

The delegation will also meet with president of the

Amman Chamber of Industry Khaldoun Abu Hassan, Jordanian entrepreneurs and will visit several hospitals and pharmaceutical industries.

The delegation includes 13 experts in fields as diverse as drug manufacturing and transfer of technology.

Head of the diplomatic Yugoslav mission in Jordan Oliver Botvika stated his hope that the delegation's visit to Jordan would restore the volume of trade between both countries' levels previous to the onset of Balkan crisis.

Boycott resolved; Mafraq children to return to school

MAFRAQ (J.T.) — Approximately 19,000 school children in Mafraq Governorate are returning to school today, thereby ending a several day strike staged in protest against the relocation of the educational department in that region.

The schoolchildren and their parents were protesting a recent Ministry of Education decision to move the local department of education from Mafraq to the Sabha district.

Prominent notables also convened a meeting and resolved to boycott the schools until an adequate solution had been reached.

A local press report stated that the issue was settled subsequent to intervention

on the part of the Ministry of Education which ruled that officials in that department of education will work for three days weekly at the original department offices and the rest of the week at the second location in Sabha.

The Ministry of Education denied the means to open a third department in the governorate as some have been demanding but stated that it would work on this issue at a later date.

The students who participated in the strike should make up for the lost classes on Thursday of the next few weeks, it said.

Government schools are normally closed Thursdays and Fridays.

What's Going On

AMMAN THEATRE FESTIVAL

* Syrian performance entitled "Ismail Hamlet" by Walkside Troupe and Palestinian performance entitled "Exception and Rule" by the Theatre Day Productions and Gaza Theatre Laboratory respectively at 7:00 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. at the Royal Scientific Society.

* "Hanging Words" at The Ahliyyah School for Girls, Jabal Amman at 11:00 a.m.

LECTURE

* "Spanish Picaresque and Arab Picaresque" by Dr. Antoine Khater at the University of Jordan, Al Farahidi auditorium at 12:00 noon.

EXHIBITIONS

* The African ceramic arts exhibition at Al Bait Furniture Establishment premises, Mecca Street, until April 10.

* Artworks by Egyptian artist Jamil Shafiq entitled "Black and White" at Baladna Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 687598), until April 10.

* Spring exhibition 1997 at Orfali Art Gallery, Umm Uthaina, until April 6.

CONDOLENCES

The Ambassador and staff members of the Australian Embassy and Austrade in Amman

wish to convey their deepest sorrow and condolences to their dear colleague and friend Jan Sherdan and to her family on the passing away of their beloved sister and daughter

Kareman Sherdan

Sri Lanka agreement opens doors for peace talks

COLOMBO (R) — An agreement by Sri Lanka's two main political parties to work together to end the island's ethnic war has opened the possibility of peace talks with the Tamil Tiger rebels, diplomats and analysts said Friday.

President Chandrika Kumaratunga of the ruling People's Alliance and Ranil Wickremesinghe, leader of the main opposition United National Party, agreed Thursday to take a "common approach" to solve Sri Lanka's protracted war with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

The leaders agreed that the president would seek the opinion of the opposition leader on significant developments relating to the ethnic conflict, regardless of which party is in power.

They also said that the party in opposition would not undermine any discussions between the ruling party and any other group, including the LTTE, aimed at ending the ethnic conflict. Diplomats and Tamil politicians said the statement reflected the determination of the two biggest political parties to work together to end the 13-year-old war and opened possibilities for peace talks with the rebels.

"The possibility of such (peace) talks has been clearly indicated in the statement. Such a statement could not have been issued without preparatory work," Neelan Thiruchelvam, a parliament deputy of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), told Reuters. He said if talks were

resumed the chances of success were higher than in the past when the ruling party was unsure of opposition support.

The government last held peace talks with the LTTE in 1995 but they were suspended after the rebels sank two naval boats in eastern port of Trincomalee in April of that year.

"It is a strong possibility that the government might be considering several possibilities, one of them being reopening talks with the rebels," an Asian diplomat told Reuters.

Another diplomat said there were reports that the elusive LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran had indicated his willingness to talk to the government if he was assured that there was political consensus among

Sri Lankan parties.

"There is a sense of exhaustion with the war and everybody wants peace," said a Tamil politician who declined to be identified.

Douglas Devandana, leader of the Eelam People's Democratic Party, said he welcomed efforts to form a common platform on the ethnic crisis but added that Tamil-speaking people in Sri Lanka should be differentiated from the LTTE since the rebels had a separate agenda.

"Coming together is important for a lasting political solution. But talking to the LTTE is different," said Mr. Devandana, a former rebel turned politician.

The LTTE are fighting for a separate homeland for minority Tamils in Sri Lanka's north and east. The

government says more than 50,000 people have died in the conflict. The LTTE says the number is higher.

Sri Lankan Foreign Ministry officials told Reuters that there are currently no moves to resume talks with the rebels or involve a third party to mediate to end the war.

"The agreement among the two parties is on the table. Other than that there is no hidden agenda," one official said.

The Tamil leader who declined to be identified also said there was little possibility of mediation. "But there could be third party facilitation," he said.

An LTTE spokesman in London was not immediately available for comment.

Zaire rebels will negotiate from a position of strength

GOMA, Zaire (AFP) — Zairean rebels due to talk in South Africa with representatives of President Mobutu Sese Seko will be negotiating from a position of strength, determined to make no concessions on a ceasefire or sharing power.

In South Africa the domestic SAPA news agency, citing unnamed diplomats, said Friday the talks were expected to begin in Pretoria Sunday, but there was no official confirmation.

Buoyed by their capture of a quarter of Zaire since going on the offensive six months ago, the rebels now have one overriding aim: The departure of Mobutu, who has ruled Zaire more or less single-handedly for the past 31 years.

The rebel delegation, led by "Foreign Minister" Bizima Karaha, will be discussing an eventual "sum-

mit" between Mr. Mobutu and rebel leader Laurent Desire Kabila.

But the talks are seen in this rebel headquarters town on the border with Rwanda simply as a gesture to the international community, alarmed by the rebels' continuing progression. The rebels are thus prepared to talk, but not to modify their position.

Mr. Kabila has maintained all along that any ceasefire must be the result of negotiations rather than coming before them.

That is because any ceasefire would benefit government troops, who are fleeing their strongholds — usually looting as they go — as the rebels approach from the east.

The rebels reject any idea of sharing power, not only with Mr. Mobutu, but also with long-time radical opposition leader Etienne

Tshisekedi, who became prime minister Wednesday after the ousting of Kengo Wa Dondo, blamed for the army's failure.

Rebel spokesman Raphael Gbenda said Thursday that the rebels would refuse to take up the six cabinet posts — including defence and foreign affairs — that Mr. Tshisekedi reserved for them in his government.

Mr. Mobutu, weakened by prostate cancer, remains the only man with whom the rebels are prepared to hold substantive talks, particularly now that Mr. Tshisekedi has emerged as Mr. Kabila's main rival for eventual domination of Zairean politics.

Mr. Kabila has thus ignored Tshisekedi's outstretched hand, classifying him as an "enemy" and now a member of the "Mobutu clique."

The rebel leader's intransigence is likely to upset

some Tshisekedi partisans who would like to see the two men combine to dethrone Mr. Mobutu.

The talks starting in South Africa appear unlikely to be decisive, with the rebels determined to continue their military advances and Mr. Tshisekedi predicting Thursday that the talks would not be of any use.

The rebels are advancing on both Lubumbashi, Zaire's second biggest city and the capital of the southern province of Shaba, rich in copper and cobalt, and on Mbuji Mayi, the capital of the diamond mining province of eastern Kasai, where government troops were reported Friday to be on a looting spree — usually a precursor to withdrawal.

Rebel occupation of those two provinces would cut off much of the government's source of funds, and divert

them to rebel coffers.

The rebels captured Mr. Kisangani, capital of Haut Zaire province and Zaire's third biggest city, on March 15 — virtually without a fight — shortly after the government had announced a "total and overwhelming" counter-offensive which failed to materialise.

Another rebel target is Mr. Mobutu's home village of Gbadolite, where the president spends most of his time when he is in Zaire.

It is on Zaire's northern border with the Central African republic and would constitute a symbolic prize which would signify the end of Mr. Mobutu's power if Kabila paraded down its streets at the head of his men.

The ultimate objective is Mr. Kinshasa, in Zaire's far west.

Kabila has promised to be in the capital by June.

1996 set grim record for executions, Amnesty says

GENEVA (AFP) — Last year set a new record for capital punishment with more than 7,000 death sentences being passed and more than 4,000 carried out, 3,500 of them in China, Amnesty International said Friday.

The human rights organisation welcomed a move by the U.N. Human Rights Commission which called Thursday on countries which still have the death penalty to limit executions. The resolution condemning capital punishment was adopted despite opposition from a number of countries, including China, Japan and the United States.

Passed by 27 votes to 11, it also called on countries still practising state-sponsored execution to spare adolescents under 18 and pregnant women.

Amnesty underlined that in countries where the death penalty is most frequently applied, executions often followed unfair trials with convictions often based on confessions

obtained by force from prisoners denied legal access.

At least 4,272 prisoners were executed in 39 countries last year, while a further 7,017 people were sentenced to death in 76 countries, Amnesty said.

The figures — which only represent part of the true number of death sentences and executions — mark an increase of 30 per cent on 1995, when 3,276 prisoners were executed and 4,165 sentenced to death.

This great leap forward is largely attributed to an anti-crime campaign launched in China last April. Amnesty recorded 3,500 executions in China, most victims being hastily dispatched at the conclusion of dubious trials.

In Ukraine 169 prisoners were executed, at least 140 in Russia, and more than 110 in Iran.

The above four countries between them account for 92 per cent of all executions in the world last year.

Unconfirmed statistics attribute 123 executions to Turkmenistan, and Iraq is also believed to have implemented numerous death sentences.

In the United States, at least 3,150 prisoners were on death row in September 1996, with 45 death sentences being passed in the course of the year.

However, despite the increase in executions, Amnesty noted a growing tendency for countries to abolish capital punishment.

Belgium was the latest country to do so, bringing to 58 the number of countries that have totally renounced the punishment.

A further 15 countries have abolished the death penalty except for extraordinary crimes, and 27 countries with the penalty still in their legislation have suspended all executions for 10 years.

More than half the world's nations have now either abolished or no longer practise the death penalty, Amnesty said.

Filipino who found Busang gold site buried

MANILA (R) — A Filipino geologist who helped discover what had been touted as the world's greatest gold find this century was buried Friday, and his family said they would probably never fully know the circumstances of his death. Michael De Guzman, chief geologist for Bre-X Minerals Ltd., was buried in a gold-coloured casket 17 days after he fell to his death from a helicopter taking him to the Busang gold site in the jungles of Indonesia.

At an emotionally charged funeral, De Guzman's mother collapsed weeping in her seat as a younger brother, holding back his own tears, sang the late geologist's favourite song, "My Way."

"Probably we will never know what actually happened, we are hoping against hope," De Guzman's brother, Simplicio Jr., told reporters.

The funeral took place a day after the Philippines' top civilian investigating agency, the National Bureau of Investigation, carried out a second autopsy on De Guzman's remains. Results were expected to be

announced next week.

A week after his death on March 19, Bre-X stunned the international mining community and the capital markets when it said the Busang property that De Guzman helped discover might hold less than the 71 million ounces of gold it had announced previously.

The original amount, worth some \$25 billion at current gold prices, would make it the gold find of the century.

"No, absolutely not," Simplicio De Guzman said when asked if his brother was the kind of person who might commit suicide.

"There are other things going for him," he said, adding that his brother had plans to build a school in Busang as well as in Manila.

An Indonesian official had said the geologist might have committed suicide, saying a letter from De Guzman found in the helicopter he was riding stated he was suffering from acute hepatitis B.

Simplicio said he had seen the letter but refused to talk about its contents pending the outcome of investigation. But he insisted that, "my brother did not have hepatitis B."



FILM PREMIERE: Actress Elizabeth Shue, star of the new film "The Saint," poses for photographers as she arrives at the film's premiere Thursday in Beverly Hills. The film, due to open in the United States Friday, also stars Val Kilmer in the leading role (Reuters photo)

Cambodian cannibals released

PHNOM PENH (R) — Two Cambodian men who are part of a stillborn baby were detained for more than a month before being freed because authorities could not find any law prohibiting cannibalism, the Phnom Penh Post reported on Friday.

"I have released them... the act (cannibalism) is not prohibited under the constitution, so the suspects cannot be punished," Tith Sothy, chief judge of the eastern province of Kompong Cham, told the Fortnightly newspaper.

The newspaper quoted the two men as saying they were helping the father of the stillborn baby bury the child when a third man came to the gravesite and said: "If we make a soup with the baby, it will be delicious."

One of the stillborn child's legs was cut off with a hoe and was made into a soup which the men then ate.

Police arrested the first two men on Feb. 12, but the third man escaped. "We didn't know what the crime was, but we had to arrest them because we knew they had done it," said Kompong Cham police chief Som Chheangly. The police chief, the judge and human rights workers said that despite the men's release, the act of cannibalism violated Cambodian morals.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Alabama troopers find \$23 m in cocaine

WASHINGTON (R) — A cocaine haul valued at \$23 million was found in a load of bananas at a routine truck inspection near Evergreen, Alabama, NBC television reported on Friday. An estimated 1,100 pounds (1.1 short tonnes) of cocaine, Alabama's largest drug seizure ever, was discovered after traffic control officers were alerted by a drug-sniffing dog, NBC said. Narcotics officers were then called in. The driver of the vehicle, a semi-trailer which was carrying about 30,000 pounds (15 short tonnes) of bananas, had been detained but had not been charged early on Friday, NBC said. An Alabama state police dispatcher in Evergreen was unable to provide additional details.

Colombian riot convicts demand 'copters

BOGOTA (R) — Convicts leading a riot, in which at least five guards died, demanded Friday to be flown out of a jail in northern Colombia by helicopter to an undisclosed location, the regional human rights ombudsman said. The inmates, some convicted leftist guerrillas and others former police officers, requested 10 parachutes, while one man, a jailed leader of the now defunct M-19 rebel group, demanded political exile in Cuba. Ombudsman Carmen Quintero said. About 550 prisoners seized control of the jail compound in Valledupar, in Cesar province, after taking weapons from prison guards Thursday evening. A national prison institute (INPEC) spokeswoman said the prisoners had taken 16 hostages, including the jail's deputy director and a 14-year old girl.

Invitations to H. Kong handover party sent

HONG KONG (AFP) — Invitations have gone out to around 400 foreign VIPs to attend Britain and China's joint celebrations for Hong Kong's handover of sovereignty in June, a British diplomat said Friday. "The 400 international invitations are at the level of foreign minister, although of course it is up to governments to decide who to send along," the diplomat told AFP. In all around 4,000 people will be invited to the great celebrations on June 30, the day before Britain's last major colony returns to Chinese rule. Heads of international bodies such as the World Trade Organisation and the International Monetary Fund have also been invited, the diplomat said.

Greek police defuse bomb at Alitalia office

ATHENS (R) — Greek anti-terrorist experts on Friday defused a makeshift time bomb placed outside Alitalia's offices near the Athens international airport after a warning from an urban guerrilla group, police said. They said the fighting guerrilla formation group, known for its time bomb attacks, called an Athens daily newspaper to warn of the attack and say it was staged "to support the suffering Albanian people." The Italian airline's offices on Voulgamenis Avenue in the suburb of Argiropoli were closed at the time. The group exploded a bomb earlier this year outside the Peruvian embassy in solidarity with rebels holding hostages in Lima.

Man killed for stealing an orange

COLOMBO (AFP) — A 24-year-old man was beaten to death in north-western Sri Lanka for stealing an orange worth 10 rupees (17 U.S. cents), police said Friday. The victim, J. N. Disanayake, had helped himself to an orange at the Kurunegala bus station on Thursday night when he was attacked by the vendor and several others, police said. Three men have been arrested.

Russia denies violating Ukraine airspace

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russia Friday denied allegations by Ukraine that its military aircraft had violated its airspace last month. A Russian Air Force spokesman, quoted by Interfax agency, said Friday: "Russian forces carried out flights which conformed to an exercise plan and did not violate any regulations on overflying neutral territory." He added that the flights in question were in accordance with the Chicago convention which governs flights over neutral zones. On Thursday, Ukraine said it had introduced "restrictions" on Russian planes overflying its territory as a reprisal for the alleged violation.

To learn about the bomb, surf the Internet

By Robert Burns
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Tour a nuclear missile base in North Dakota. Check out the inventory of nuclear-capable B-2 Stealth bombers in Missouri. Study the Pentagon's strategy for fighting a nuclear war.

Sound like peeking at state secrets? Not in the age of the Internet, it's not.

The federal government, led by the Defence Department, has quietly taken the lead in providing public access to vast amounts of national security information — nuclear and otherwise — that anyone with a computer and a modem can find.

It's not just arcane scientific papers. It's jazzy photos and graphics, too.

Recognizing Americans' growing infatuation with the Internet's World Wide Web, two private

experts on nuclear weapons are publishing an online guide to more than 500 nuclear-related web sites.

"Even in an area traditionally as secretive as nuclear weapons, the Internet has transformed citizen access," said Robert S. Norris, senior analyst at the Natural Resources Defence Council. He and William Arkin spent several months compiling the guide, which they call "the Internet and the bomb."

They published paper copies of the guide this week — The Online Version, with direct links to each web site, is to be available soon on the home page of the Natural Resources Defence Council's nuclear programme, at <http://www.Nrdc.org/nrdcpro/nu-clear/>. They expect private researchers and journalists to use it.

Rick Silva, who manages the defence department's main web

site, called Defencelink, said efforts to help computer users find their way are a valuable service.

"If it's all public information, that's the beauty of the web," he said.

The guide is not meant to spill any nuclear secrets — the lion's share of web sites identifies are maintained by the federal government — mostly the defence department. There is little on the web about nuclear bomb design that you could not already obtain through traditional — and unclassified — sources.

"People should not think there is some deep, dark secret about the bomb," Norris said in an interview. "There really is no secret about the bomb," other than techniques for enriching uranium and processing plutonium.

The Pentagon has strict rules about the kinds of nuclear-related information it puts on the Internet. Typical of the warnings

you encounter on a defence department web site is this one on the home page of Francis E. Warren Air Force Base, Wyoming, home to 200 nuclear intercontinental ballistic missiles:

"Warning: This site contains unclassified, non-sensitive, non-privacy act use only information."

And this for good measure: "Unauthorized use could result in criminal prosecution."

Keeping in mind that users of the Pentagon's web sites are subject to online monitoring by computer security watchers, here is a small sampling of attractions:

On the home page of the 91st Missile Wing at Minot Air Force Base, North Dakota, you can tour the home of the "roughriders," as these missileers call themselves. Among the sights: A photograph of an airman inside a missile silo, a view of the warheads atop a Minuteman III nuclear missile and a map of Minot's missile

fields scattered between Grand Forks and Williston, North Dakota.

In the joint chiefs of staff joint electronic library, the text of JP 3-12, "doctrine for joint nuclear operations." This unclassified document spells out the pentagon's basic concepts for planning, conducting and concluding a nuclear war. When it mentions the "initial laydown of nuclear weapons" it is referring not to disarmament but to a beginning salvo of nuclear strikes.

Each of the military services has a site for "lessons learned" from war games. You can identify these exercises by code name and tell which involve nuclear war gaming, but the text of the actual "lessons" is not available. The air force notes that it puts these texts only on the Sigrinet, a classified Internet.

Azerbaijan presses Russia over illegal arms for Armenia

MOSCOW (AFP) — Azerbaijan has urged Russian President Boris Yeltsin to take effective action to recover arms worth at least \$1 billion which were illegally handed over to Armenia, the Azerbaijani news agency Turan reported Friday.

Azerbaijani President Geidar Aliyev chaired a special meeting of senior Azerbaijani officials Thursday and told them he had appealed to Yeltsin to take effective measures to bring back to Russia all the arms illegally transferred to Armenia, Turan said.

Russian troops unofficially armed Armenian separatists who fought a bitter eight-year war against neighbouring Azerbaijan over the disputed enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh.

A tense ceasefire has been in effect between the two Caucasus neighbours since May 1994, but peace talks over the enclave, mainly populated by Armenians, are deadlocked.

Last month, Russian Defence Minister Igor Rodionov announced an inquiry into the illegal transfer of 84 Russian T-72 army tanks and 50 infantry fighting vehicles, along with \$1.2 million worth of spare parts, to Armenia in 1994-1996.

According to Lev Rokhlin, chairman of the Russian lower house's defence committee, Russia lost arms

worth at least \$1 billion in the illegal transfers to Armenia. Interfax news agency reported.

In a speech Wednesday to the lower house, the state Duma, Rokhlin said that in addition to armour, the Russian army handed over to Armenia eight R-17 missile systems, 40 rockets for OSA air defence systems, 27 Krug air defence systems with 349 rockets for them, 40 portable Igla anti-aircraft systems, 18 Grad rocket launchers and a large quantity of other arms.

The Azerbaijani officials warned that the arms transfers could destabilise the situation in Azerbaijan and neighbouring countries.

Last month, the Azerbaijani parliament passed a resolution saying the illegal deliveries had "caused grave damage to Russian-Azerbaijani relations and Azerbaijan's confidence in Russia's position as co-president of the Minsk group of the OSCE," which is trying to resolve the conflict with Armenia.

According to Rokhlin, numerous supplies for Armenia were disguised as commercial deals paid by the state, one of them worth at least \$70 million.

He said former Defence Minister Pavel Grachev was involved in the scams, adding that the prosecutor-general should investigate the deals.

Albania minister tries to calm anti-Rome feeling

TIRANA (R) — Albania's defence minister visited a rebel-held port Friday to calm anger with Rome over the sinking of a refugee ship off Italy and prepare deployment of an Italian-led force to protect aid to the chaotic state.

In Tirana, the military academy reopened, the first school of any type to reopen after an insurrection last month. But in a massacre that showed that order is still far off, gunmen shot dead a family of six people north of the capital.

Defence Minister Shqipri Vukaj visited Vlore, one of two ports the Italian-led force of about 6,000 is due to secure but where many were angered by the sinking of the refugee ship after a collision with an Italian corvette last Friday.

Albania says at least 80 people died, many from Vlore.

"The Italians are ready to assist Vlore in every way," Vukaj, apparently the first cabinet minister to visit the rebel-run town since the armed uprising last month, told a crowd of 3,000 in the main square. Many applauded.

He said he had come to offer condolences in the

name of both Albanian Prime Minister Bashkim Fino and Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi. He later visited families of victims.

Many of the 34 survivors of Albania's worst maritime disaster of modern times have accused Italy of ramming their boat, charges denied by Rome. Passions have calmed in the town after some threatened to kill Italian troops if they came.

"In these difficult times we should go back to work without differences of religion, region or politics," Vukaj told the crowd in the square where Albania declared independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1912.

"Albanians have never killed each other but have lived in peace... Together we shall go forward on the road of true democracy," he said, adding that Albania's new unity government had backing from all European governments and the United States.

The sinking badly complicated Italy's plans to lead the U.N.-approved force of at least eight nations — Italy, France, Greece, Turkey, Spain, Romania, Austria and Denmark — to protect food and medical supplies to the



Italian Marines of San Marco Battalion board the Italian amphibious landing ship San Giusto at the Militar port of Brindisi following a ground training exercise Friday. A multinational security force being assembled for Albania may have to stay in the Balkan country beyond elections planned for June, Italy's Defence Minister Beniamino Andreatta said on Friday (Reuters photo)

Balkan state.

The force is to secure Vlore and the northern port of Durres as well as Tirana airport as headquarters for supplies.

In Rome, Defence Minister Beniamino Andreatta told the

La Stampa newspaper that the force may have to stay beyond elections planned for June.

Vukaj's trip may also be to sound out Vlore for a visit by Prodi. Prodi made a surprise, tightly-guarded trip by heli-

copter to another southern Albanian town with Fino Wednesday and said he would soon visit Vlore.

Much of the south has been run by rebel "salvation committees" since central control collapsed in mid-March after

protests at the failure of popular savings schemes spilled over into insurrection.

The committees, which want President Sali Berisha to resign, say they are trying to stop looting and banditry. In Vlore, food supplies are running low but the town has calmed. The hospital reported no shooting deaths or injuries for two days.

In Tirana, the military academy reopened with a ceremony attended by Chief of Staff Adem Copani, who inspected about 200 cadets on a dusty parade ground.

Cadets, including about 15 women, saluted the Albanian flag, red with a black double-headed eagle, was raised. The 110-day academy, with many smashed windows, had been shut since a mob stormed in and looted weapons on March 13.

In Fushë-Kruje north of the capital, unidentified gunmen massacred a family of six in continuing lawlessness.

The state Albanian news agency ATA said that Niveia Gjokaj, 62, and her 58-year-old wife Hake Gjoka were killed in the attack. Thursday evening along with their two daughters, their son and their daughter-in-law.

Animal antics spice British elections

LONDON (R) — Animal antics spiced the British election Thursday, with foxes and headless chickens pursuing political leaders along the campaign trail.

Two teddy bears and a rhinoceros even joined in the political picnic.

Conservative Prime Minister John Major started it when he accused opposition Labour Party leader Tony Blair of chickening out of a television debate in the leadup to the May 1 election.

"We are trying to egg Mr Blair into a debate," said Mr. Major. "One day Labour are fighting cocks, next day they are chickens."

The Conservatives tried to upstage the launch of Labour's election manifesto by sending out a chicken — alias actor and self-confessed vegetarian Noel Flanagan — to strut his stuff and bait Mr. Blair.

But the daily Mirror tabloid, a staunch supporter of Labour, fought back by producing a headless chicken who nearly met a sticky end when he tried to approach Mr. Major.

Security men muscled him away but the headless chicken assured reporters he had not been seriously hurt — "just a few ruffled feathers," he said.

The two chickens squared up to each other but after much strutting backed off

from a major confrontation. But the animal antics didn't end there. The ever-persistent daily Mirror sent a fox along to bait the Conservative chicken.

Then, to add to the lunacy, two teddy bears called Nigel and Tony set up a picnic outside the Labour manifesto launch and waved a placard proclaiming "Tony bear is in it for the honey."

When Mr. Blair went campaigning at a London shopping centre, a man dressed in a grey plastic rhinoceros suit stood outside to protest at what he called the "ludicrously cheap" level of political debate in the campaign.

The Conservative chicken then pursued Mr. Blair to Scotland but twice came to a sticky end.

The chicken suffered the ultimate indignity when a teenage girl yanked off his head. It had to be hastily recovered by a policeman.

The dogged fowl then tried to push forward to confront Mr. Blair but was hustled away by the ever-persistent fox who boasted "I had him for dinner. I stopped him getting anywhere near Tony."

Mr. Blair magnanimously invited the chicken to dinner but in deference to the vegetarian actor, promised chicken would not be on the menu. Flanagan declined.

WFP doubles emergency operation in North Korea

SEOUL (AFP) — The United Nations' World Food Programme announced here Friday it was doubling to 204,000 tonnes its emergency food aid programme in hungry North Korea to help children under the age of six.

World Food Programme (WFP) Executive Director Catherine Bertini said the programme would be increased from 100,000 tonnes to help about 2.6 million young children and hospital patients as well as a work-for-food programme.

The WFP chief told a news conference without the aid North Korea would be faced with "large-scale malnutrition and possible death from starvation."

The value of the programme, which currently stands at \$41.6 million, would be increased to \$95.5 million beginning on April 1.

Bertini called on the international community to support the effort, adding "we also call on the international community to help meet the overall needs" in North Korea through complementary bilateral aid. She estimated the overall food aid requirement in North Korea amounted to \$1.3 million tonnes, leaving a shortfall — after all current aid programmes were taken into account — of around one million tonnes.

The WFP chief said the South Korean government was the first in the world to receive the new aid proposal in document form. While there had not been time for Seoul to review the request "we did get indications their intention was to continue to support multilateral food aid," Bertini told reporters one day after her arrival here.



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Mind your manners, Catholic monk tells churchgoers

ROME (AFP) — A prominent Italian Dominican monk has published a "good manners guide" for churchgoers, who he said had become "extraordinarily" bad-mannered during church services.

Raimondo Sorgia, 67, a theologian who translated Pope John Paul II's theology doctorate thesis, published the volume under the pen name "Jean De La Maison."

He said using portable telephones in church, particularly during mass, was one of the worst new forms of bad manners.

Sorgia, also took a dim view of women who attended mass or in some cases even read liturgical texts in

front of the altar, wearing mini-skirts or otherwise dressed so as to titillate the sexual desires of men present.

"It is very hard in such circumstances to concentrate on uplifting and spiritual thoughts because the sexual instinct is always lurking in the background," he wrote.

The list of bad manners Sorgia gave was a long one. It mentioned people who chanted during services, plunged their whole hands into holy water stoups, who shifted benches or made the sign of the cross with "lightning" speed.

Another passage criticised people who went to confession without preparing in

advance what they wanted to say. "Let us have no more of penitents who fail to reflect before going to confess and who regard priests like spiritual tooth pullers," the book said.

"I have even seen two old ladies almost come to blows about who should go into the confessional first," he said.

There were also those who chewed gum or sweets and left sticky souvenirs behind under the pews, shoes that squeaked or stiletto heels that clattered.

Sorgia had a last word of advice for mothers, saying they should never forget to bring a dummy when taking babies to mass, to stop them crying.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation

Established 1975

الوقت الجordanian perspective

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The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays.

Subscription and advertising rates are available from the

Jordan Times advertising department.

Right step, right time

LEBANON'S RECENT decision to start issuing identity documents to its nationals that do not contain a reference to the religion of the bearer is an important step towards adopting relevant and contemporary expression for citizenship. Before the decision became effective Lebanese identity documents had contained information about the religious faith of the holder in keeping with long-held traditions that divided the people on sectarian grounds. For the first time ever, therefore, Lebanon is now poised to enter the threshold of civil society by deleting the criterion of religion altogether in official registration.

The step will not of course roll back the de facto discrimination among the Lebanese on the basis of religion but it will reverse at least the legal and formal biases on sectarian grounds. For this alone, it deserves to be emulated elsewhere in the Arab World where sectarianism, especially in Egypt nowadays, threatens the fabric of some traditionally tolerant societies. Differential treatment on the basis of religion or race or ethnic origin or sex are supposed to be a taboo by the organic laws of practically all the Arab countries, including Jordan. It is very unfortunate that we too still classify our citizens on religious, criterion in violation of the Constitution which stipulates that Jordanians are equal irrespective of, inter alia, their religion.

Religion is a personal matter that belongs first and foremost to the individual concerned. The Lebanese government is, therefore, right in stopping the reference to people's religion in official documents.

The move, it might ultimately be said, must not be interpreted as anti-religion or against Christianity or Islam. All it implies is that for all official purposes, people would henceforth be treated equally no matter what their faith is. There can be nothing objectionable, and everything positive, about this goal.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for Al Ra'i urged the Arab Nation to support Jordan's drive to end the sanctions imposed on Iraq for invading Kuwait in 1990, and said that the time has come for the Arabs to come to the help of their brothers and sisters in Iraq who have suffered for so long. Sultan Hattab said that the Iraqis have implemented all U.N. Security Council resolutions and complied with all the hard conditions imposed on them by the U.N. Sanctions Committee and the U.N. arms inspection teams and therefore the time has come for Iraq to be welcomed back into the international community's fold. King Hussein is now spearheading efforts to lift the embargo on Iraq and end the sufferings of its people, despite a recent statement by the U.S. secretary of state who said sanctions will be maintained as long as Saddam Hussein remains in power, noted the writer. He said that such a statement reveals to the world that the embargo imposed on Iraq is no more justified and the perpetuation of sanctions is clearly employed as an American political tool to serve Washington's own interests. In light of this situation, said the writer, the Arab countries must reconsider their position and adopt a concerned stand with that of Jordan's in restoring Iraq back to the Arab World.

JIHAD MOMANI, a writer for Al Dustour, criticised Jordan Television for failing to fully cover the events in the occupied Arab territories, especially the Land Day protests in Palestinian cities. Not a single news bulletin should be void of reports about the situation in Palestine and the heroic fight the Arabs are putting up in defence of their land and their destiny, demanded the writer. Jordan Television should realise that the Jordanians, who maintain very strong ties with their brothers and sisters west of the River Jordan, yearn to learn about the situation in Palestine, he said. Jordan Television can by no means act neutral in the ongoing events and should expose all the atrocities and repressive measures practised by the Israelis against the Palestinians, demanded the writer. He said the shaky Jordan-Israel peace treaty should not prevent Jordan Television from presenting a full coverage of the events in Palestine and the idea of seeing the official television station acting as a neutral party to these events is rejected, Jordan Television, added the writer, has to understand that Palestinians and Jordanians live as a united family because they truly constitute a people facing a common destiny.

Jordanian Perspective

Jordan committed to achieving self-reliance, but needs help and support along the way

By Dr. Musa Keilani

THE TALKS His Majesty King Hussein held last week in Washington with President Bill Clinton and senior administration officials obviously heralds a turning point in Jordanian-U.S. relations. Of course, Jordan and the U.S. need not share identical views on the present direction of the Arab-Israeli peace process, but both countries definitely agree on the overall objective of the process — a stable and secure Middle East where every country and people could live and prosper in the right atmosphere, away from violence and extremism and on the basis of respect and recognition of the legitimate rights of all concerned.

Again, Amman and Washington definitely differ on what is defined as legitimate rights, particularly given the implicit American endorsement of the Israeli stand that the Jewish state reserves the sole right to determine the extent of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, whether in terms of territory or in terms of self-determination.

We do not know yet whether His Majesty's talks in Washington did make a dent on the American position, which, for all technical and practical purposes, could determine the course of the peace process. But one thing is clear: regardless of the state of Jordanian-U.S. relations, it is highly unlikely that Washington could influence Jordan's principled stand that any comprehensive peace in

the Middle East should be based only on respect and recognition of the full territorial and political rights of the Palestinians, as well as the return of the Golan Heights to Syria and Israeli evacuation of a major chunk of Lebanon.

The Jordanian reasoning is unsbakeable because it is based not only on a clear understanding of the realities on the ground but also on international legitimacy, as enshrined in United Nations resolutions and international behaviour. But Washington somehow gives us the impression that it is ignoring those realities, particularly the Palestinian aspirations for independence and statehood.

On the bilateral front, the King's talks were indeed a tremendous success, given the public statements given by President Clinton and others whom the Monarch met. For starters, it was indeed very refreshing to hear President Clinton affirm that despite the key role that Jordan plays in the quest for peace in the Middle East the Kingdom has not received the kind of external support it deserved.

Jordan realises well that any infusion of direct American economic assistance to the Kingdom faces tough hurdles in the U.S. Congress not simply because Jordan is the beneficiary but because of the peculiarities of the political relationship between the present American legislature and the Clinton White House. But we are also aware that there

are many different avenues that Washington could use to help Jordan without going through Congress if the White House has the will and inclination to translate President Clinton's acknowledgement that Jordan deserves support.

Mr. Clinton's decision last year to grant Jordan the status of a non-North Atlantic Treaty Organisation ally, the provision of military assistance to the Kingdom and the signing on Thursday of a bilateral investment treaty are some of those avenues. Recent figures released by the U.S. embassy in Amman say that Jordan received up to \$1.6 billion in American assistance since 1990, but a closer look at those figures shows that more than half of that "assistance" was in the form of loans which Jordan is obliged to repay.

We do appreciate the debt relief that the U.S. offered us, but that gesture has not really pushed Jordan out of the red.

It is not that Jordan expects the U.S. to solve all its economic and financial problems. Grants are not a Jordanian aim in itself. The firm commitment that Jordan has displayed to its economic restructuring programme speaks volumes for the Kingdom's consistent and dedicated quest to attain self-sufficiency and self-dependence. But it needs real help and support along the way.

THE WEEK IN PRINT

Upcoming general elections — controversial issues and test for the new government

REVIEWED BY ELIA NASRALLAH

THE FOCUS of attention of Arabic dailies this week was on domestic issues and the situation in the occupied Palestinian lands.

The new government's attitude towards the next general elections drew mixed reactions from a writer for Al Ra'i daily who said the announcement that the elections will take place on schedule and that the government will be neutral in the elections, which will be fair and free, was to be commended.

The columnist, who writes under the pen name Meem, said that Jordanians welcome such a development and hope that the government will live up to expectations.

However, the writer said that a statement by the interior minister, stressing that the government has no intention to lower the age of voters to 18 from 19 and that the Lower House of Parliament's 80 seats will not be increased, was controversial since many people called for just the opposite.

Suleiman Arabiyat, a writer for Al Dustour, seemed to hold the same views and said that the Interior Ministry's statement about the elections was important and serious because it was meant to reassure the public that the coming elections will be free and fair. But he said that the government's intention to maintain the same number of deputies in the Lower House increased the opposition parties' doubts about the government's real intentions.

The other controversial point, he added, is the government's refusal to allow 18-year-olds to vote, thus restricting the number of voters in the coming general elections.

He said that since there is still much time till the elections, it would be advisable that the ministers refrain from making statements which could stir controversy and wait until the government has completed its promised consultations with various political groups about these issues.

Bassam Emoush, a writer for Al Ra'i and member of the Islamic Action Front in the 12th Parliament, cast doubts on the new government, recalling that it was under Abdul Salam Majali's first government, in 1993, that the previous infamous elections were held.

Those elections were conducted in an unaccept-

able, undemocratic and illogical atmosphere, charged the writer, expressing hope that the present government will take lessons from the past.

The writer said that the public will be watching to see if Dr. Majali and his government will live up to the promise that the elections will be free and fair, stressing that the public will judge the government by its stand in the coming months.

The writer said Jordanians would like to see the general elections held in complete freedom. Bassam Haddadin, a leftist member of Parliament who writes for Al Bilad weekly, criticised the opposition groups as lacking real political views and failing to present an agenda regarding their dealing with the present government or even the previous governments and the coming general elections.

Following the abrupt end of the Kabarti government and the formation of the new cabinet, none of the political parties, except perhaps the Islamic Action Front, has crystallised a clear position vis-à-vis the normalisation process with Israel or the peace treaty.

Many of those who are considered in the opposition ranks had given their approval of the treaty, which means that they do not realise what they really want and so they remain impotent and cannot exercise any pressure on the government with regard to its future actions.

The writer said many of the existing parties have proved that they are not really political groups and that their formation and alliances do not follow the rules of the democratic concept.

He called on political parties to find common denominators and adopt serious and clear positions that can clearly depict them as an opposition bloc.

Basem Sakkiha, a writer for Al Dustour, commended the work of the Public Security Department which, he said, ensure stability and security in the Kingdom.

But while thanking the security men for their efforts, one should note that they are overdoing it, he said. Citing a personal experience, the writer said that in driving around town at night, he was stopped and asked to produce an identity card and his driving licence seven times in one night, at different locations in the capital's western districts. In

order to be allowed to make the trip.

While admitting that the Public Security Department faces a very heavy responsibility, he said it should be noted that such stringent security measures are not really needed at a time when the country enjoys an era of peace.

Writing on the Palestinian issue, a columnist for Al Ra'i daily charged that the siege imposed on the Palestinian cities by the Israeli tanks and troops is part of the Israeli government's plot to ruin the prospects of peace in the Middle East.

Sultan Hattab said that unless the Arabs and Muslims stand together and take practical steps, instead of issuing meaningless statements of condemnation against Israel's practices, nothing will change on the ground.

Israeli Premier Benjamin Netanyahu is able to pursue his plans and measures in Jerusalem only because he realises that the Arabs and Muslims are in total disarray, have no weight and cannot prompt the world community into exercising pressure on the Israelis to prevent them from carrying out their illegal measures, said the writer.

Mr. Netanyahu is assured of the U.S. backing for his plots and of the so-called Israeli opposition whose leader, Shimon Peres, has recently declared while in South Korea that Jerusalem will remain Israel's united capital, adding that the city has never been the capital of the Palestinians.

Al Dustour daily hailed the decision of the Arab foreign ministers meeting in Cairo, to freeze Arab countries' normalisation with Israel as a step in the right direction.

The decision was a major turning point and a big achievement for the Arab diplomacy, but it remains to be seen whether the Arab countries will abide by the decision, said the paper.

The decision was a united political action against Israel's arrogance and a follow up to last June's Arab summit meeting in Cairo where the Arab leaders threatened to take such step unless Israel desists from its actions, continued the daily.

It said the decision was an embodiment of true Arab solidarity with the Palestinians who are in most need of practical, rather than theoretical, support and concrete, rather than verbal, backing for their cause.

LETTERS

Hammering in concepts

To the Editor:

THROUGHOUT HISTORY fashion has played a vital part in any military conflict. The myriad of military uniforms in existence and throughout history is simply astonishing. Each country's army and its branches seem to have at least one uniform for every occasion man has to invade another's human rights. The summer collection with its smart khaki shorts, the winter collection with its lined woolen jackets, the seaside uniform in navy blue and the aerial combat look that is just plain cool. It is probably one of the world's biggest unadvised industries, outstripping by far the big fashion houses like Chanel or Dior. After all, uniforms imply order and without order there is no army. When military organisations exist without uniforms, they are usually labelled as freedom fighters or terrorists, depending on which side of the border one's standing.

To put it simply, a photo of a few fully armed guys in uniforms beating an unarmed civilian is a portrait of maintaining order and keeping the peace. While a photo of the same people in normal clothes doing the same exact thing would strongly suggest they were disturbing the peace.

I was leafing through the newspapers the other day, when just such a photo representing military fashion in severe conflict with civilian articles of clothing caught my attention. A few fully armed Israeli soldiers clad in the new green spring collection were beating a civilian dressed in bright yet gaudy colours. The headline over the photo read: "Israel sits down to discuss terrorism with Palestinians." I thought about the headline for a while and after considering all the intricacies of uniformed terrorism, terror tactics and civilian suppression methods I felt a sense of relief that the Israelis were finally mature enough to owe up to their daily use of terrorism and discuss it with the Palestinians. This, I felt, showed Israel's seriousness about the peace process and their readiness to put an end to the pain and the suffering which, since the introduction of colour in most of our local publications, has been reaching more vivid and colourful

beights.

As I was reading the Israeli view of events I found that the civilian in agonising pain, on the ground in the photo, wearing the old Mickey Mouse T-shirt, was the focus of their discussion. Or at least the part of him that was caught on camera at that specific instant.

I looked at the photo again: a few fully armed soldiers were literally kicking some sense into the poor unarmed rascal's head and no doubt discussing the finer points of self-control and the down side of using terror tactics as they were doing it.

That, to my disappointment, must have been the Israeli way of sitting down and logically discussing terrorism with their "new partners in peace." I was saddened and wondered how effective a method of persuasion using someone's head as a football could be. I reasoned it must be quite persuasive, otherwise why would one use such methods with "partners?"

I remembered the Israeli rightwing government's assurances that they are committed to peace. Knowing the Israelis as a logical and honest race, I could only deduce that some higher ups in the Israeli policy-making machine must have the statistics on how many times one could kick an Arab's head and still get through. The research would probably be presented in a very orderly and scientific way in one of those brightly coloured folders with different coloured bar charts for the different ages and the number of kicks they can sustain while maintaining a certain level of comprehension.

It could even be that after seeing one such folder, one would be inclined to deduce that Arabs are far better disposed to that kind of persuasion than actually sitting down and solving the outstanding issues. On the other hand, maybe my understanding of the word "partner", which was adopted a while back instead of "enemy", is not as comprehensive or colourful as the Israeli definition.

Ahmad Tabbaa, Amman.

Domino effect for economy

To the Editor:

HOLDING THE Jerash festival, in July, was a brilliant idea; it enables people to have a good time. The activity, however, has a weakness: it is too short, only two weeks. In order to fully utilise it as an international attraction and to enhance Jordan's image as a tourist centre, I would venture give some reasons why it should be made longer.

A festival that lasts, say, from April to October could utilise the beautiful Jordanian summer time. It may make people stay longer. Performances could be repeated and spread out in order for the audience to attend more than one activity. This would increase the revenues and the organisers could be enabled to ensure better performances the year after by paying the underpaid Jordanian artists more. That, in turn, would also attract international-calibre artists, thus raising the standard of the festival.

With people (including tourists) staying longer, building hotels in Jerash becomes feasible. More buses to and from Jerash will be needed, thus reducing unemployment among so many Jordanians whose ultimate objective is to become drivers. Increased transportation needs also means that the recently established Jordanian vehicle assembly plant will have a better chance of succeeding in selling its products. Since buses use aluminium profiles, local aluminium extrusion plants will have a larger market

to share.

Visitors who stay longer, on the other hand, means more consumption, thus benefiting local industries. Local restaurants could flourish, even though for only half the year — they could open up in Aqaba for the other half.

Tourists will have more time to browse through the curios and other "Jordanian" things and end up buying stuff they do not need but are happy to pay a premium for. Increased sales of such items will mean more consumption of the dyes used for their colouring, thus making it feasible to build a dye-making plant in Jordan, which, in turn, will reduce unemployment. Then, better standards of living change people's attitudes towards the number of children and, hopefully, will cut the population growth rate, thus making any economic growth be felt directly by a smaller population. This "domino effect" can be literally extended to all industries under the sun and can, in time, change the state of economy in the country.

The Jordanian economy is in need of ideas and actions (remember Lebanon's and Dubai's shopping festivals) to be implemented in a consistent and liberal manner to jump-start it from its present stalemate. The solution to Jordan's economic problems is out there. If only the private sector were in charge...

Ranuzi Batarseh, Amman.

'Netanyahu's disregard for the truth does not serve the cause of justice'

By Michael Jansen

THE MOST striking aspect of the present crisis between Israel and the Arabs is the absolute refusal of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to budge even one inch to accommodate the Palestinian and Arab side.

Indeed, instead of seeking a meeting of minds and a compromise of policies, Netanyahu has sought confrontation at every stage in the development of the crisis. And he has gone on the record to justify his stance by making a string of false assertions. The words "false assertions" characterise, in this writer's most diplomatic manner, the practice of putting out a series of lying statements to explain major errors of judgement and deflect responsibility for the rapidly escalating confrontation. Instead of leading by imposing his will on his disparate right-wing cabinet, Netanyahu, Israel's first elected and allegedly "most powerful" prime minister, has chosen to lie in order to escape the consequences of his lack of leadership.

This practice was demonstrated clearly on March 31 when he granted an interview to Israel Radio's English language evening news programme. Netanyahu began by adopting an air of outraged innocence over the "Land Day" resolution adopted by Arab League for-

eign ministers, calling for suspension of relations with Israel, closing down of Arab diplomatic offices in Israel and Israeli missions in Arab countries, reactivation of economic sanctions and a boycott of multilateral negotiations.

He began by blaming the confrontation on the Arab leaders who have failed "to educate the Arab people about peace." When made earlier, this remark drew from Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak the response: "Don't ask us to educate our people for peace with Israel. They'll tell me to go to hell." In the present climate of crisis brought on by Israel's actions. This significant riposte was made to an interviewer from "The Jerusalem Report," a liberal Israeli publication and was meant to warn the Israeli people about where the policies of their government had taken them.

Netanyahu went on to say: "I've been talking to my people about peace and I've said that we are going to make difficult decisions. We're also going to have points of conflict in the course of the negotiations. We cannot agree on everything. But we're also going to take very difficult decisions that will hurt many of the people who voted for me." Indeed, that is expected of a leader who has pledged to meet Israel's commitments to the Palestinians.

Then he said, "I've done that," dropping his voice, portentously. As if he had done everything required of him by the Oslo accords. But this is a total fabrication for he has implemented only Israel's most publicised breaches of these accords and left the solid provisions concerning the hand-over of land and authority until later... whenever.

What does he claim to have done — to the "hurt" of those who voted for him? There are five things. He has pulled his army out of "80 per cent of Hebron," keeping the 20 per cent that counts: the heart of the Old City containing Al Ibrahim Mosque. He has released 30 Palestinian women prisoners, several of whom had "Jewish blood on their hands." And he has paid to the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) \$30 million in taxes collected by Israel from Palestinians working in Israel. His government also decided on a 9.1 per cent gross (two per cent net) redeployment from the West Bank and permitted the Palestinian presidential aircraft to use the Gaza airport.

All these so-called accomplishments were well beyond the expiry date. Netanyahu is asking for credit for doing things which should have been done by the previous Labour government 11 to 18 months earlier. Netanyahu made no concessions by

implementing, under great external pressure and grudgingly, the minimum he could manage.

Netanyahu went on: "What is required of the Arab side is to recognise that it should not go back to this mode of ganging up on Israel" whenever there is disagreement. He characterised the "idea that the (Arab) boycott will be reinstated" as "absurd." "It's not going to be reinstated because it can't be reinstated. We live in an open world" where trade flows, "Israel is a technological power..." He bandied forth that the primary Arab boycott remains in force as far as the Arab countries which have not signed a peace treaty with Israel and has failed to notice that few Arab consumers want to buy Israeli goods in the first place. Israeli technology is not unique. The Arabs buy from Japan instead.

Netanyahu went on to say that the Arab countries should "leave the past behind and go to the future." An excellent recommendation. But Netanyahu conveniently forgot that Arab lands captured in the past still remain under Israeli occupation and until the occupation is removed the Arabs will not look to a future of cooperation and coexistence. Ignoring this fact — suppressio veri — Netanyahu called upon the Arabs to talk and stop using coercive "pressure tactics"

against Israel which, he said, would not work. But he failed to mention that normalisation and negotiating had produced Israeli dictation and unilateral actions such as the construction of the new settlement on Jabal Abu Ghneim and the small-scale redeployment decision.

Netanyahu accused the PNA of "continually failing to comply with Oslo, violating its provisions, giving the green light to terror, fomenting so-called spontaneous demonstrations in order to shed, spill blood of Palestinians before the cameras... all against Oslo." A fine string of accusations which are all based on a dubious interpretation of the events of the last two weeks. Netanyahu then said: "We're keeping Oslo. They're violating Oslo," combining suggestio falsi with suppressio veri to make his case. Israel's (and not just Netanyahu's) violations of Oslo are too numerous to list. Israel's most flagrant and serious violations concern what it has been doing, on the ground, in the Palestinian territories. Israel has completely disregarded its commitment to "view the West Bank and Gaza as a single territorial unit, whose integrity is to be preserved in the interim period." Israel has in fact done everything it can to break up these territories into small units which can be easily controlled. It has done this by building a

vast network of roads bypassing Palestinian towns and villages, which are designed to serve Jewish settlements and settlers. The road building with the object of serving settlements in the long run violates the second key principle put forward in the Oslo accords: "Neither side shall initiate or take any step that will change the status quo of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip pending the outcome of the permanent status negotiations." Road building and expansion of settlements does just this, as does the building of a new settlement in the environs of Jerusalem. Because settlements and Jerusalem are issues to be negotiated in the "final status" settlement.

Thus, when Netanyahu states blandly, as he did in the radio interview, "...they accuse (us) of doing something which is perfectly within our right by the Oslo agreement..." he is telling a flagrant falsehood.

Unfortunately, too few critics of Netanyahu reply to his fabrications which are generally delivered smoothly, convincingly. And these critics fail because they have not read the texts of the Oslo accords, which are freely available.

He continued: "...that is to build Jewish and Arab neighbourhoods in Jerusalem, primarily on private Jewish land." And he has the audacity to state: "There is a limit to the abuse of truth and the abuse of jus-

tice. What is being done is against truth and justice." Indeed it is. But the fault is not on the Arab side for it is Netanyahu who is abusing both truth and justice. Let us look at his statement. He claims to be building "Jewish and Arab neighbourhoods in Jerusalem."

First, the construction on Jabal Abu Ghneim is taking place in the West Bank, Israel's "Greater Jerusalem," with its expanded municipal borders, is recognised only by Israel. And even if Israel's gerrymandering is accepted, the construction site straddles the "boundary" between "Greater Jerusalem" and the West Bank. The site is not a "neighbourhood" closely connected with other Jewish urban "neighbourhoods" but a "colony" perched on a hill-top with the Palestinian town of Bethlehem and Palestinian villages as its neighbours. A colony in hostile territory like other colonies throughout the West Bank. A colony now surrounded by soldiers and tanks until barbed wire can be slung round the site.

Second, Israel is not building any "Arab neighbourhoods" but has pledged to grant permits for the Palestinians to build housing in existing neighbourhoods where Israel may, eventually, meet a commitment to supply sewage, roads and increase school classrooms. Palestinians still have to obtain building permits (at

\$30,000 for licence fees) and find the funds to build their houses. Israel is investing an estimated \$300 million in "Har Homa," providing infrastructure and public finance for house construction. So Netanyahu is right when he says he is "building" the settlement but fabricating when he claims to be building for Palestinians.

Netanyahu's statement that Jabal Abu Ghneim/Har Homa is "primarily private Jewish land" is very far from the truth. It is 25 per cent Palestinian owned, 16 per cent private Jewish land and the rest state land, all illegally expropriated by Israel. Furthermore, one of the Jewish owners of the 16 per cent went to the Israeli Supreme Court to contest that expropriation. He lost, of course, because the court always comes down on the side of the state which shows no more respect to Jewish private land than to Palestinian land when it comes to building settlements.

The struggle for justice in the region depends to a very large extent on publicising the truth about what is happening. If someone — Arabs, Westerners, Israelis — opposed to Netanyahu's policies — stopped tolerating the sort of disregard for the truth practised persistently by him, and exposed his assertions for the fabrications they are, the cause of both truth and justice would be served.

Netanyahu offers Camp David-style talks

(Continued from page 1)

Ms. Albright also praised Norway for its role in the Middle East peace process that led to the 1993 Oslo accords between Israel and the Palestinians.

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat said he would not rule out a meeting with Mr. Netanyahu but blamed Israel for the deadlock in peace talks. Palestinians say that before any progress can take place, Israel must halt the expansion of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and the Jabal Abu Ghneim construction that began March 18.

"A settlement freeze is a must now," Palestinian Municipal Affairs Minister Saeb Erekat told the Associated Press.

On Sunday, Mr. Netanyahu plans to fly to Minnesota to hold talks with King Hussein on his call for an intense six-to-nine-month negotiation blitz to resolve the big issues standing in the way of a permanent settlement. King Hussein will be at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester for prostate surgery.

The talks proposed by

Mr. Netanyahu would deal with the most sensitive issues — the future of Jerusalem, Jewish settlements, Palestinian refugees and Palestinian demands for statehood.

Palestinian officials said Mr. Arafat was not ready to allow Israel to abandon promises in the Israel-Palestinian accords that call for three further Israeli troop withdrawals in the West Bank.

In Washington, Mr. Mordechai held firm that his country continue its settlement construction.

"I think we have our right to build a Jerusalem united, for Israeli people and for Palestinians that are living there," he said.

Israel announced Thursday it would no longer seek the extradition of Musa Abu Marzouk, a Hamas leader jailed in New York. Israel had sought to put Mr. Abu Marzouk on trial on suspicion he financed and planned terror attacks against Israelis (see page 12).

Mr. Netanyahu is apparently concerned that Mr. Abu Marzouk's return would be a rallying point for militants and pave the

way for further attacks.

The United States for the second time in six months faces the tough task of saving the Middle East peace process from collapse, with its prestige on the line as chief sponsor of the initiative.

Mr. Netanyahu, who has practically been summoned to Washington, said the Americans had no firm plans yet, on how to salvage peace and would only offer him suggestions.

"The American peace plan is still on the drawing board," he told a cabinet meeting, adding that he expected U.S. ideas to be based on his own proposal to speed up peace talks with the Palestinians.

Since Mr. Netanyahu's election in May, he has questioned the foundations of the peace process inherited from the previous Labour government which was launched by the United States after the 1991 Gulf war.

Mr. Arafat, meanwhile, has been finding it increasingly difficult to persuade his people that a Palestinian state with Arab East Jerusalem as its capital lies at the end of the bumpy

peace process.

On Thursday, the Palestinian leader said he was "not against" a meeting with Mr. Netanyahu, their first since Jan. 15, after a spokesman for Mr. Arafat said the United States was trying to arrange such a summit.

"But the problem is how to push forward and to prevent all the breaches of the peace process, especially confiscating of lands, building settlements, 'Judaising' Jerusalem and many other issues," Mr. Arafat told journalists.

Mr. Netanyahu insisted on German television that work will continue on the settlement. "We have not occupied an Arab land. These are private Jewish properties which were sold to build homes for Jews," he said.

The United States called Mr. Arafat and Mr. Netanyahu to Washington on Oct. 1 to relaunch peace after clashes in which more than 80 people were killed, mostly Palestinians, following the opening of an Israeli tunnel in Jerusalem.

In January, the two sides implemented an accord for

an Israeli partial withdrawal from the West Bank town of Hebron. But the peace process has since been frozen, with Israel pursuing its settlement policies and making unilateral decisions on the scope of further withdrawals from the West Bank.

On a tough note, Mr. Netanyahu issued a veiled threat Thursday that the army could intervene militarily in the self-rule areas in case of more anti-Israeli attacks.

"The time for goodwill gestures towards the Palestinians is over. It's up to them to make them," he added.

Israel wants Mr. Arafat to crack down on militants, following a March 21 bombing in Tel Aviv that killed three Israeli women.

Arab countries, waiting for gestures from Mr. Netanyahu, have grown impatient with his rejection of the "land-for-peace" principle and have decided to freeze any normalisation of ties with the Jewish state.

Police seize Netanyahu phone records

(Continued from page 1)

Party, Aryeh Deri, to get a political crony appointed as attorney general. Mr. Netanyahu, several cabinet ministers and senior officials in his office have been questioned in the affair. Police have seized personal records from the office of Justice Minister Tzahi Hanegbi who has been questioned repeatedly. All have denied wrongdoing.

U.S. officials hold talks with Talabani

ANKARA (Agencies) — Two senior U.S. officials met Friday with Kurdish leader Jalal Talabani in northern Iraq to discuss the stalled peace process in the Kurdish-held region.

Acting U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs David Welch and State Department Office Director Robert Deutsch were accompanied by Turkish officials, a statement from Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) said.

Mr. Welch and Mr. Deutsch already met Thursday in Salahuddin in northern Iraq with Mr. Talabani's rival, Massoud Barzani, leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP).

The PUK statement, dated from the town of Koisanjak, said the U.S. officials and Talabani discussed the U.S. and Turkish-sponsored peace process and the need for the Iraqi government to comply with U.N. resolutions.

It said Mr. Welch's visit was "timely and highly appreciated by the PUK as it demon-

strates continued commitment by the U.S. and its coalition partners to peace and security in Iraqi Kurdistan."

"The PUK pledges its continued cooperation with the sponsors of the Ankara process to restore peace to the region," it added.

The PUK and KDP have jointly controlled northern Iraq in defiance of Baghdad since 1991, but fell out in May 1994 over power-sharing and tax revenue and 2,500 people have died in the ensuing conflict.

The Ankara peace process was launched after the latest upsurge in violence in August and September, in which Iraqi government troops entered the Kurdish "safe haven" on the side of the KDP.

The KDP pulled out of the peace talks on March 11 after the assassination of a senior KDP official in Erbil, accusing the PUK of involvement in the killing.

However, Mr. Barzani announced the release Thurs-

day of all PUK prisoners held by the KDP after his talks with Mr. Deutsch and Mr. Welch.

A KDP statement described the gesture as "a sign of its commitment to reach a widespread settlement to the inter-Kurd conflict."

The Iraqi government has reacted furiously to the U.S. delegation's visit to the north, slamming it as "interference."

The PUK statement said Iraq still had troops deployed around Erbil, the capital of Iraqi Kurdistan, and urged the United States to oblige it to withdraw them to pre-August 1996 positions.

Turkish State Minister Ahmet Cemil Tunc, returning Friday from Iraq, called for the lifting of United Nations sanctions he said had devastated the Iraqi population.

"Weapons and other items of strategic importance should not be given, but nobody has the right to throw women, children and the old into poverty because of a mistake," Mr. Tunc told reporters at the end of a four-day visit.

No breakthrough in Peru hostage crisis

(Continued from page 1)

Red Cross officials were seen carrying what looked like an electric cardiogram and a few boxes of medicines into the residence on Thursday.

The hostages and their families are allowed to send regular mail back and forth — though their communications are read and sometimes censored by the MRTA and government authorities, news reports have said.

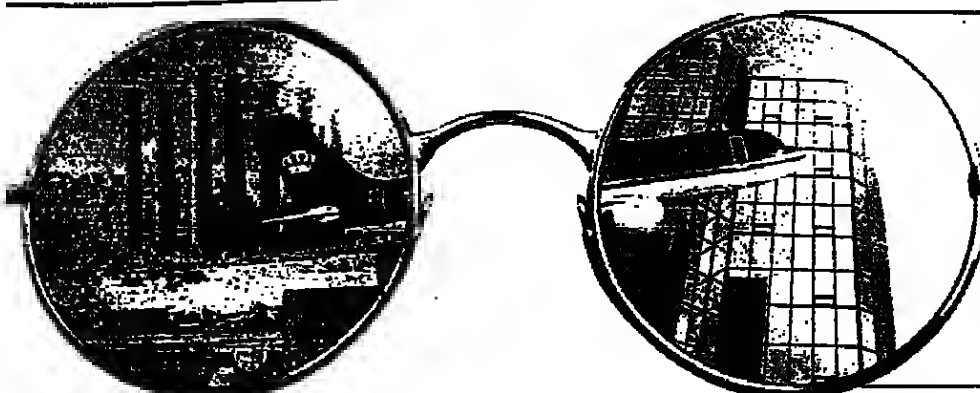
Red Cross spokesman Steven Anderson said on Thursday a total of 8,094 pieces of mail or messages have been carried between the hostages and the outside world since the siege began.

Twenty-four captives are

Japanese, including Tokyo's ambassador to Peru and top Japanese businessmen, and the rest are Peruvian.

Government officials denied a newspaper report that representatives of the mediation team had carried a farewell message from Mr. Cerpa to his jailed wife, Nancy Gilvono, who is serving a life term for involvement in MRTA activities.

The Lima newspaper La Republica said Mr. Cerpa had sent Ms. Gilvono, married to Mr. Cerpa for 25 years and mother of his two children, a farewell letter because he was convinced the crisis was headed for a violent ending.



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Australia take charge over Czechs in Davis Cup

ADELAIDE (R) — Australia took a commanding 2-0 lead over the Czech Republic in their Davis Cup quarter-final tie on Friday after the Czechs lost a player due to illness.

Pat Rafter and Mark Philippoussis both won in four sets against lower-ranked opponents in the opening round of singles on the grass centre court at memorial drive.

With world number one pairing of Todd Woodbridge and Mark Woodforde to contest the doubles rubber on Saturday, Australia looked set to secure a winning 3-0 lead and a semi-final meeting with either the United States or the Netherlands.

The Czechs, already weakened by the absence of four top players, suffered a setback before the start of play on Friday when Jiri Novak was forced to withdraw from his singles clash with Philippoussis because of a virus.

His late replacement, lowly-ranked left-hander David Rikl, proved no match for the big-serving Philippoussis and was beaten 6-1 6-4 2-6 6-4 in a match lasting one hour and 47 minutes.

Rafter earlier claimed the opening rubber by beating Martin Damm 6-1 7-6 (9-7) 4-6 6-4 in another top-sided contest that occupied a near-capacity crowd for two hours and 41 minutes.

The Czech Republic's campaign has been hit by the refusal of Petr Korda, Daniel Vacek, Bohdan Ulihrach and Slava Dosedel to play in the tie. Novak, ranked 60 in the world, complained of a high temperature on Friday and was ruled out on medical advice.

"It looks like an influenza virus. He wanted to play but physically he was not able to," Dr. Andrew Potter told reporters. "It may take two or three days for him to recover."

Rikl, ranked 179, was scheduled to sit out Friday's matches before partnering Pavel Vizner in an unproven combination in the doubles but Novak's sudden illness upset the team's plans.

It was not clear whether Rikl or Damm would back up Vizner in Saturday's doubles.

Rafter, the world number 43, took advantage of his greater experience on grass to dominate an opponent who is ranked one place below him. Damm gradually settled into the match but his failure to convert a set point during the second set tie-break eventually proved decisive.

"It's a fantastic feeling to win in a Davis Cup rubber at home. I started really well in the first and second sets but then Martin started putting some more pressure on me," Rafter said afterwards.

Philippoussis cruised to victory against Rikl although the powerful Australian showed only glimpses of the form that took him to victory in the Arizona ATP tournament last month. A brief lapse of concentration in the third set was quickly overcome.

Boasting the fastest serve in the world and a world ranking of 24, Philippoussis served 15 aces to subdue his left-handed opponent. Rikl was making his Davis Cup debut.

Singspiel wins Dubai World Cup

DUBAI (R) — Singspiel, trained by England's Michael Stoute and ridden by American jockey Jerry Bailey, mounted a late challenge to favourite Siphon in a night of drama on Thursday to win the \$4 million Dubai World Cup for Sheikh Mohammed, the man who inspired the race.

Bailey, who won the inaugural race last year on U.S. Champion Cigar, said: "After Cigar, I thought nothing could feel better but this was just as good."

The glory went to Singspiel, but tragically, Japanese long-shot Hokuto Vega, who had lifetime earnings of \$8.3 million, fell at the final turn and had to be put down.

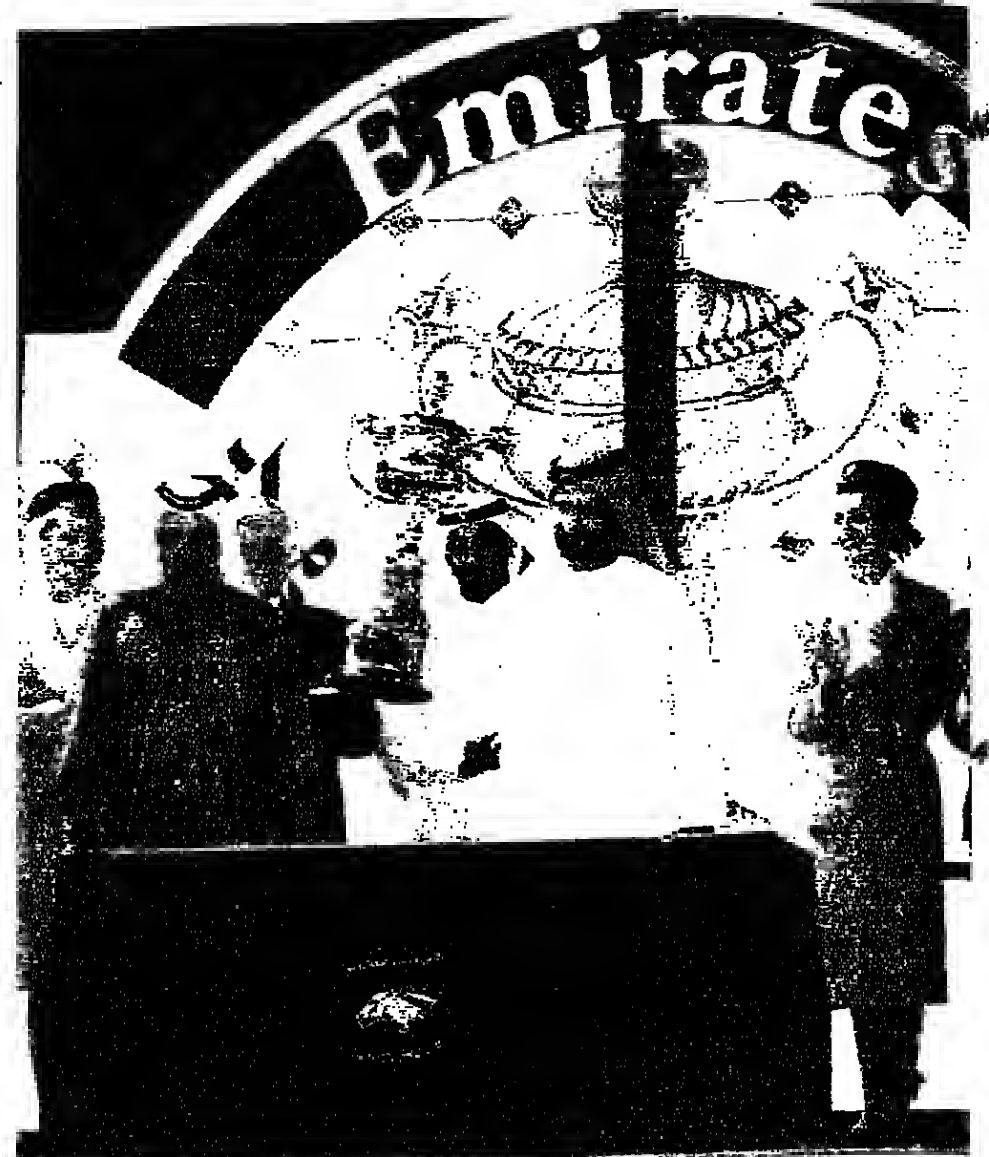
Her jockey Norihiro Yokoyama and Jason Weaver aboard Britain's Bijou d'Inde, who came crashing down as well as he tried to leap over the fallen Japanese mare, were taken to hospital.

Doctors said they were not too seriously hurt.

Jockey Michael Kinane, aboard outsider Luso, said the Japanese horse was trying to edge out of a tight pack when she fell. "It was a gutsy effort, but she paid for it," he said.

The race, run over 2,000 metres of sand at Nad Al-Sheba in the desert outskirts of this Gulf city, looked to be Siphon's as jockey David Flores made the best of his way home.

But Singspiel was not to be denied, battling through the inside and forging clear for a length and a quarter success with siphon finishing a length



General Sheikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the Crown Prince of Dubai (C), holds up the trophy after his horse Singspiel ridden by American jockey Jerry Bailey won the \$4 million Dubai World Cup. His brother Sheikh Maktoum (L), ruler of Dubai, was on hand to present the trophy (Reuters photo)

and a half ahead of his stablemate Sandpit.

Both the second and third placed horses were bred in Brazil and trained in California by Richard Mandella, who could not conceal his disappointment.

"I had great anticipation of winning," he said, but he had failed to reckon completely with Singspiel, who had previously won the world's second richest race, the Japan Cup when

ridden by Frankie Dettori.

It was a night of triumph for Sheikh Mohammed, Dubai's crown prince and the world's most successful owner-breeder.

Singspiel, a five-year-old bay horse, trained at Newmarket but stabled in Dubai for the last 11 weeks, added the \$2.4 million first prize, the richest in racing, to his already substantial previous total of \$3 million.

"When you win a great race like this in your own country, that's a great

thing," said Sheikh Mohammad.

Stoute said it was one of the greatest moments in his training career. "I knew he was in fantastic shape but you can't have a rehearsal for what was going to happen out there tonight. He's a star."

The race had been delayed for five days while track officials dried out the waterlogged course following a torrential downpour last Saturday.

Few people are buying tickets for Sydney 2000

SYDNEY (AFP) — Bankers trying to sell reserved seats for the 2000 Olympics to raise A\$344 million (\$272 million) for the main stadium admitted here Friday they are A\$214 million — or 21,000 people — behind target.

At A\$10,000 per "gold package" guaranteeing comfort and a splendid stadium view of blue ribbon events such as the 100 metres final, only 13,000 people have so far rushed to buy — instead of the 34,400 hoped for.

"Clearly we are disappointed that the offer has closed less than fully subscribed," said underwriters' spokeswoman Sue Cato.

"In hindsight there were a number of contributory factors including the complexity of the prospectus, delays in the launch of the offer and lack of certainty regarding events after the Sydney Games."

But she said with four years to go, organisers were confident there would be no problem in selling all of the packages which also guarantee free entry to events in the stadium for the next 30 years.

She said while there had been a shortfall in gold package sales, the alternative and more expensive platinum offer had been fully subscribed.

Stadium Australia management chief executive Chris Chapman said the position of the underwriters had no bearing

on the stadium's construction or its progress.

Stadium Australia and the government had received full payment, construction was on budget and on schedule to be complete in the first half of 1999.

Only the underwriters, four leading investment banks, the MacQuarie Bank, Deutsche Morgan Grenfell, ABN Amro Hoare Govett and ANZ securities, are behind their schedule in raising the \$344 million, which represents almost 60 per cent of the total cost of the stadium.

Discussions about the shortfall have taken place with the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games, Olympics sponsors and the International Olympic Committee.

"These discussions have left us in no doubt the shortfall will be sold in the coming year," Cato said, adding that overseas sales had not yet begun.

She said there was no question the gold packages would appreciate in value as the games draw closer, as construction of the stadium continued and as hiring arrangements were concluded with the football regulating authorities which would also use the stadium after the Games.

Middlesbrough in first major final in 121 years

LONDON (AFP) — Middlesbrough, against Leicester, may not be the neutral's idea of a perfect English League Cup final but that will not bother the players and fans of the two unfashionable sides who meet at Wembley on Sunday.

Middlesbrough have never been in a major final in 121 years and having hauled themselves out of the bottom three in the league, Bryan Robson's team plan to enjoy every minute of the new experience.

Leicester on the other hand have a close association with Wembley — albeit none too successful.

Four FA finals ended with four defeats, including three in nine years between 1961 and 1969, and the club graced the famous turf a further four times in 1990s promotion play-offs (two wins, two defeats).

Their only major honour in a 113 year history is the League Cup in 1964 when the final was a two-legged home and away affair and few of the big sides were

bothered about it.

Cynics might suggest the same thing applies now as the Premiership's big guns tumbled out of the competition in the early rounds without due concern.

But with a UEFA Cup place available for the winners, Sunday's clash is still a major part of the English soccer programme and for Middlesbrough's foreign legion it means a great deal.

Brilliant Brazilian striker Juninho, recently voted the league's top player for March, says it has always

been his dream to play in a final at Wembley.

"I used to watch the English finals on TV as a young boy and dream of playing there, never realising it would come true," he said.

Fellow-Brazilian Emerson, Italian striker Fabrizio Ravanelli and Dane Mikkel Beck have all voiced similar feelings — the lure of Wembley being a strong factor in tempting them to play their trade in England.

And it is their contribution that has helped

Middlesbrough reach the final and claim the scalps of Liverpool and Newcastle along the way.

Emerson and Ravanelli weren't exactly delighted with the club earlier in the season as their absenteeism and criticism made the fans wonder about their commitment.

But they have settled down and Ravanelli's eight goals in the competition underline his hunger for success.

There is clearly no doubting Boro's firepower and if they click on the day no defence in the country can hold them.

Midweek international appearances by the superstars may prove a problem on Wembley's draining turf and should the match go into extra-time the smart money will be on Leicester.

Short of money and high-

name stars, manager Martin O'Neil has nevertheless built a formidable team who just do not know when they are beaten.

An indomitable spirit exists at the club, shown to best effect in the bruising extra-time success against Wimbledon in the semi-final.

Emile Heskey and Steve Claridge form a muscular, bustling strike partnership a million miles removed from Boro's, but it is no less effective for that.

Muzzy Izzet and Neil Lennon provide the youthful

exuberance in midfield with the experienced and calm Gary Parker the guiding hand.

Rock-like centre back and captain Steve Walsh leads by example and sums up Leicester's attitude of total commitment.

The final is unknown territory for most of the players on duty, but one thing is certain.

Leicester will fight and fight again for every inch of grass and if Middlesbrough do lift their first ever trophy they will have earned it.

Paris goalie fights cannabis ban

PARIS (AFP) — France's international goalkeeper Bernard Lama, said Friday he would fight a possible two-month ban for smoking cannabis.

"He has asked for a second test. That's all we'll say at present," Paris St. Germain spokesman Jean-Philippe d'Hallville said.

The player was dropped for Wednesday's 1-0 victory over Sweden in a friendly international when he was replaced by Monaco's Fabien Barthez, who failed a similar test in 1995 and was suspended for two months.

The 33-year-old Lama, who won his 35th cap playing in a friendly international against the Netherlands five weeks ago, failed a drugs test before Wednesday's match.

Lama has been struggling to recapture his form after suffering a serious knee injury last September.

French Football Federation President Claude Simonet said he was not allowed to comment on the matter at the present time.

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A Q 5
J 8 6
A 4
A K Q 5 4
WEST
J 10 6
Q 10 8 2
J 2 5 3
J 5
EAST
A 2 7 4 3
7
K 6 7 5
10 6 3 2
SOUTH
K 5 2
A K 2 4 3
Q 10 2
A 7
The bidding:
SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
1 NT Pass 2 A Pass
2 NT Pass 2 S Pass
4 C Pass 4 NT Pass
5 C Pass 5 C Pass
Opening lead: Jack of A
Suppose you were shown just the trump suit on this hand and asked how you would play it. Could you come up with an immediate answer? You can't afford to give one until you see the combined assets of your side.
North's two-club response was forcing to game. Four no trump was forcing to game, in which the key-card Blackwood, in which the king of trumps counts as an ace. South's five hearts showed two key

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SEAN CONNERYin
THE ROCK
(IN DOLBY STEREO)
Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL:677420
CONCORD
CONCORD "1"
MADONNA & ANTONIO BANDERAS...IN
EVITA (new print)
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CONCORD 2
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Seattle SuperSonics' Detlef Schrempf (11) drives on Milwaukee Bucks' Vin Baker (42) in first quarter NBA play in Seattle's Key Arena. Seattle defeated Milwaukee 103-80 (Reuters photo)

Bullets surprise Bulls with 6th consecutive win

Heat beat Pacers 92-78

LANDOVER, Maryland (R) — Rod Strickland scored 26 points and dished out 14 assists as the Washington Bullets surprised the Chicago Bulls 110-102 on Thursday for their sixth consecutive win.

Georgie Muresan added 24 points and 13 rebounds for the Bullets, who halted Chicago's eight-game winning streak and moved back into a tie with Cleveland for the eighth and final playoff berth in the Eastern Conference.

"We're a pretty confident team right now," Strickland said. "Things are coming together right now, especially because we're playing consistently."

Michael Jordan scored 34 points and Scottie Pippen added 26 for Chicago.

With rebound king Dennis Rodman sidelined by injury, Washington dominated the boards, outrebounding Chicago 46-29.

"Strickland was really a problem for us all night. When he didn't penetrate, he found Georgie under the basket for a couple of easy ones," said Bulls coach Phil Jackson, whose team will play Washington in the first round of the playoffs if the Bullets hang on to eighth place in the East.

At New Jersey, Matt Geiger personally outscored the Nets in the third quarter with 11 of his 18 points and Glen Rice scored 24 to lead the Charlotte Hornets to a 93-87 victory.

Ricky Pierce added 19 for the Hornets, who outscored New Jersey 36-10 in the third quarter.

Charlotte needs one win or a loss by Washington to clinch a playoff berth.

Kendall Gill scored 26 points for the Nets, who reached the 50-loss mark for the third straight season.

At Indiana, Jamal Mashburn scored 23 points, including 10 in a row midway through the fourth quarter, as the Miami Heat beat the Pacers 92-78.

Alonzo Mourning scored 17 points and Voshon Lenard added 15 and

played terrific defence on Reggie Miller for the Heat, who have won 10 of their last 11 games and moved three games in front of the idle New York Knicks in the race for the Atlantic division title and second place in the East.

Rik Smits scored 16 points for Indiana, which fell three games behind Washington and Cleveland in the race for the final playoff spot in the East.

In Orlando, Darrick Martin scored 31 points and Loy Vaught added 15 as the Los Angeles Clippers snapped a four-game losing streak with a 113-94 defeat of the Magic.

Martin made 10-of-14 shots, including 5-of-6 three-point range for the Clippers, who extended their lead over Sacramento to three games in the battle for the final playoff berth in the West.

The Magic drew within 90-86 with 7:36 to go but the Clippers closed the game on a 23-8 burst.

Penny Hardaway led Orlando with 27 points, making 17-of-19 free throw attempts.

In Seattle, Gary Payton scored 22 points and Sam Perkins added 17 to lead the SuperSonics to a 103-80 thumping of the Milwaukee Bucks.

Payton went 11-of-14 from the field and scored 10 of his points in the first quarter when Seattle outscored Milwaukee 30-12.

The victory moved Seattle back into sole possession of first place in the Pacific Division, half a game ahead of the idle Los Angeles Lakers.

Glenn Robinson led the Bucks with 15 points.

At Golden State, Latrell Sprewell scored 25 points to lead the Warriors to a 106-90 victory over the Dallas Mavericks, whose losing streak reached nine games.

Mark Price scored 16 points and Joe Smith added 15 and 12 rebounds for the Warriors, who took all four meetings from the Mavericks this season.

Derek Harper had 19 points, Robert Pack 18, and Sasha Danilovic 17 for Dallas.

Athletics edge Indians 5-4 in AL

OAKLAND (AP) — Mark McGwire bombed and Geronimo Berroa broke an eighth-inning tie his second homer in two days as the Oakland Athletics beat the Cleveland Indians 5-4 Thursday.

Berroa, who also homered Wednesday night in the A's opener, homered into the left-field bleachers off loser Eric Plunk with one out in the eighth. The previous batter, McGwire, hit a shot to the warning track in centre that was caught.

McGwire, who led the majors with 52 homers in 130 games last season, hit his first of the year and doubled in another run. He has driven in five runs in two games.

Kevin Lewis pitched the eighth for the win, and Billy Taylor finished for the save.

Kevin Mitchell homered for the second straight day, a three-run shot in the second. But he struck out in his three other plate appearances Thursday.

Cleveland pitchers walked 11 and repeatedly had to work out of trouble. The A's stranded 15, leaving the bases loaded in the first and sixth innings.

MAJOR LEAGUE RESULTS

American League			
Oakland	5	Cleveland	4
Baltimore	6	Kansas City	4
Minnesota	10	Detroit	6
Anaheim	2	Boston	0
Milwaukee at Texas (postponed)			

National League			
Colorado	7	Cincinnati	1
New York	4	San Diego	1
Florida	8	Chicago	2
Montreal	9	St. Louis	4
Atlanta	3	Houston	2
Los Angeles	2	Philadelphia	1
San Francisco	7	Pittsburgh	5

Coetzer ousts Sanchez at Hilton Head

HILTON HEAD, South Carolina (AP) — South Africa's Amanda Coetzer overpowered Spanish second-seed Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario in the final set for a 6-2, 5-7, 6-0 triumph in the third-round of the \$926,250 Family Circle Cup here on Thursday.

The victory put Coetzer into a quarter-final against fifth-seeded Spaniard Conchita Martinez, who defeated American Jennifer Capriati 6-0, 5-7, 6-4.

The winner of the Coetzer-Martinez showdown would face former world number-one Monica Seles or Anke Huber of Germany for a place in the final.

Huber scored a 3-6, 7-6 (7/5), 6-3 win over Iva Majoli of Croatia on Thursday.

Coetzer overwhelmed Sanchez in the final set but won the last point on a controversial call after protesting a line-judge's decision.

Sanchez slapped a backhand for what seemed to be a winner. But Coetzer complained and the umpire climbed from her midcourt seat to join the line judge in gazing at a ball mark on the clay surface.

The umpire returned to her chair, overruled the call and awarded Coetzer the match, ending the two-hour and 28-minute marathon.

Sampras calls off Asia tour after wrist injury

HONG KONG (AP) — World No. 1 Pete Sampras has pulled out of next week's Hong Kong Open.

pen and the Japan Open because of a wrist injury.

Sampras has told organisers of the two events that he suffered the injury at the Lipton Championships in Key Biscayne, Florida last week. He was beaten in the semi-final by Spain's Sergi Bruguera.

"Naturally I am very disappointed," the American was quoted as saying.

He was said to be undergoing therapy which will continue during the Japan Open, starting in Tokyo on April 14.

Hong Kong Open tournament director Michael Luevano said: "While we regret Pete will not be able to come to Hong Kong, we understand that injuries are part of professional sports."

World number three



World No. 1 Pete Sampras, seen here adjusting the tape on his racket, will be missing the two upcoming events (file photo)

Michael Chang will now be top seed for the Hong Kong event, which he has won three times since 1991. Sampras beat Chang in last year's final.

Ripken and Sheffield join billion-dollar brigade

NEW YORK (AP) — Baseball heroes Cal Ripken Jr and Gary Sheffield signed rich new contracts to help push Major League salaries to a record \$1.06 billion, 17.7 percent higher than a year ago.

The average Major League salary is 1.37 million dollars and 280 of 774 total players are above one million dollars for the season.

Minimum salaries jumped \$41,000 to \$150,000, a sum 48 players make.

Among notable 1997 non-U.S. players and salaries are Anaheim pitcher Shigetoshi Hasegawa of Japan at \$300,000, Los Angeles Dodgers pitcher Hideo Nomo of Japan at \$900,000 and South Korean relief hurler Park Chan Ho of the Dodgers at \$270,000.

Australian David Nilsson of Milwaukee will make \$2.3 million this season while another Aussie, New York Yankees' World Series hero Graeme Lloyd, will take home \$765,000.

Ripken signed a deal with the Baltimore Orioles that ensures him of \$15.1 million. The iron man of the sport has played in 2,318 consecutive games but moves this year from shortstop to third base.

Ripken will make \$6.3 million this season and next with a club option to keep him in 2000 for the same sum or buy out his pact for \$2.5 million.

Sheffield signed a six-year, 61 million-dollar contract extension with the Florida Marlins that is believed to be the richest contract in baseball history.

Chicago White Sox outfielder Albin Belle signed a five-year deal worth \$55 million while San Francisco spent \$23 million over two years for outfielder Barry Bonds, whose \$11.5 million a year salary tops the sport.

The salary gap is so great in the sport that one player, Belle at 10 million a season, will be paid more for this season than an entire team, budget-wary Pittsburgh at \$9,071 million.

Rockies rout Reds, Mets top Padres in NL

CINCINNATI (AP) — Larry Walker had two run-scoring hits in Colorado's six-run fourth inning and added a solo homer as the Rockies beat the Cincinnati Reds 7-1 Thursday for their first win of the season.

Mark Thompson, one of the Rockies' numerous pitching concerns in spring training, scattered five hits over seven innings for the win. Steve Reed and Bruce Ruffin finished the combined six-hitter.

Thompson left an exhibition against Kansas City on Saturday after only nine pitches because of inflammation in his right shoulder. He threw in the bullpen on Monday without pain and went back into the rotation.

Reds starter Pete Schourek also was a big concern this spring, as he came back from surgery to tighten a ligament in his pitching elbow last July. The left-hander was wild and ineffective in his first regular-season start, giving up three hits, two walks and five runs in three-plus innings.

The Rockies, who had lost their first two road games to the Reds after going 28-53 away from Coors field last year, sent 12 batters to the plate for six runs in the fourth and took their first lead this season.

In San Diego, Bobby Jones pitched eight strong innings and John Franco worked the ninth as New York avoided a season-opening sweep with a 4-1 win over the Padres.

New York started the season 0-2 thanks to its relievers blowing late-inning leads in each of its first two games. But Jones limited the Padres to six hits in eight innings, and Franco closed out the ninth for his 324th career save.

Bernard Gilkey hit a two-



Montreal Expos' Henry Rodriguez and St. Louis Cardinals' catcher Danny Sheaffer watch Rodriguez's second inning double fly into right field, in Montreal. Montreal defeated St. Louis 9-4 (Reuters photo)

run homer in the fifth inning to help chase San Diego starter Fernando Valenzuela.

Jones, who had a 2.33 era in six spring games, struck out five and walked one in

improving to 4-1 in his career against San Diego. Valenzuela, who was 3-0 with a 2.36 era in four starts against New York last year, gave up five hits and four runs — two earned — in five innings.

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Majali says Jordan may receive Abu Marzouk

Israel drops extradition request

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali has said Jordan would "look favourably" on any request by the United States to send Hamas leader Musa Abu Marzouk to the Kingdom after Israel dropped its bid to extradite him.

"If the Americans are asking Jordan to let him (Abu Marzouk) go back to the area and be in Jordan, Jordan will look into it and try to help," Dr. Majali told Reuters Television in an interview.

Mr. Abu Marzouk is being held in prison in New York. Dr. Majali said: "If he wants, and the U.S. would like him to go there (Jordan), then we would look into it favourably."

He said any decision would be taken on humanitarian grounds.

Mr. Abu Marzouk, leader of the political wing of Hamas and a long-time resident of the United States, said earlier on Thursday he believed a deal had been struck to send him to Jordan.

"My understanding is that everything is done," he said in an interview with Reuters in the New York prison where he has been held without charge or trial since July 1995.

U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno told reporters the 47-year-old Abu Marzouk would remain in U.S. custody for now. "It is in the INS (Immigration and Naturalisation Service) process, and we are reviewing all of our options."

A spokesman for the Israeli government said Israel's decision to suspend its request to

the U.S. to extradite Mr. Abu Marzouk was prompted by security reasons, in order to avoid more Hamas attacks.

Radio Israel said the Israeli Shin Bet security agency fears a new wave of violence if the U.S. extradites Mr. Abu Marzouk to Israel, the Jordanian Al Ra'i, daily reported.

In a related development, Bassam Al Emoush, member of the Lower House of

Parliament, who is now on a visit to the U.S., said in a telephone interview with Al Ra'i that he had hand-delivered to His Majesty King Hussein a letter from Mr. Abu Marzouk's family, requesting the King to use his good offices with the U.S. government to ensure the release of Mr. Abu Marzouk.

Dr. Emoush told Al Ra'i that Dr. Majali informed him that King Hussein showed concern about the humanitarian dimension of this case, after having read the family's letter.

Well-placed Jordanian sources told Al Ra'i that Jordan had rejected the American conditions for sending him to Jordan.

The sources said the U.S. government stipulated that he abandons political work and be put under house arrest in Jordan.

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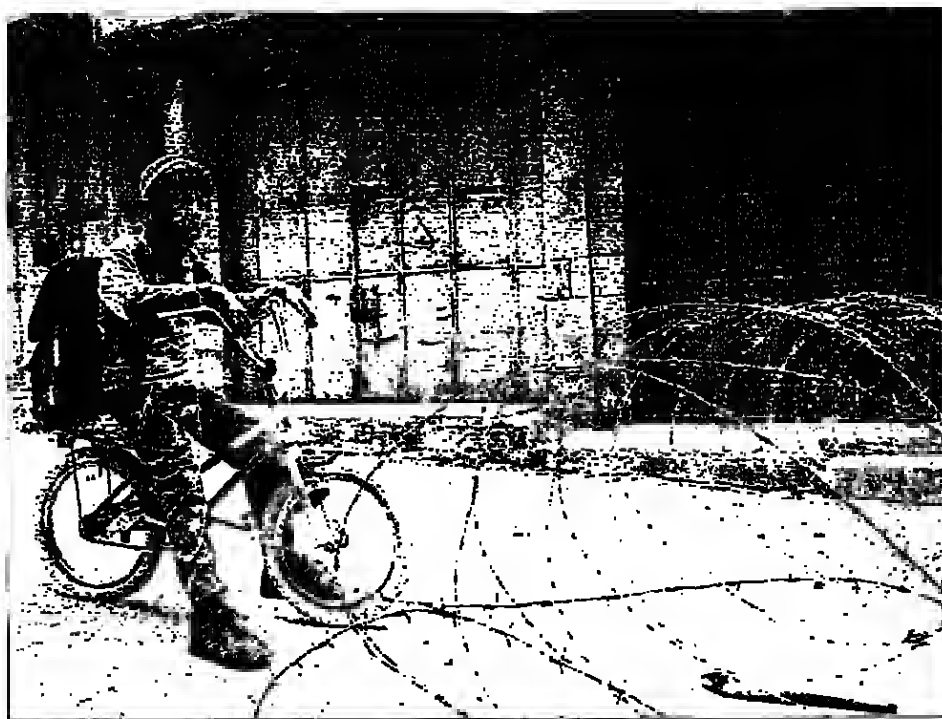
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A Jewish boy halts his bicycle as the street is blocked by barbed-wire in central Hebron on Friday. Israeli troops are keeping a very tight seal on the Jewish enclave in the divided West Bank town (AFP photo)

Bonn seeks to pacify Turkey after fire arrest

BONN (AFP) — Germany hopes that Turkish politicians will adopt a more moderate attitude after the arrest Friday of a Turkish man in connection with a fire in which three of his family died, a government spokesman said.

Relations between the two countries have plummeted since the fire — initially assumed to have been a xenophobic arson attack — which prompted Ankara to launch a series of forthright criticisms of Bonn's attitude towards Turkey and Turks living in Germany.

"The improvement of relations depends on a more moderate attitude," said spokesman Hubert Schmuller.

Azir Demir, 42, whose wife and two children died in the fire in the town of Krefeld, west Germany, has been detained on suspicion of being behind the incident, police said.

He had told investigators that he was at a bar when the blaze erupted early Monday at the apartment. Police said the fire was deliberately set with inflammable material.

Two other daughters, 15-year-old twins, were seriously injured when they jumped from the third-floor window of the apartment to escape the flames.

Without actually naming him, Ankara implicitly accused Chancellor Helmut Kohl of stoking anti-Turkish feeling by reportedly saying that Turkey had no place in Europe's culture or civilisation.

Malta conference to assess Euro-Med ties

Ghalia Alul
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Twelve Mediterranean and 15 member states of the European Union (EU) will meet in Malta April 15-16 in the second such high-level meeting, with the aim of assessing the progress achieved by Barcelona conference which called for the creation of the world's largest free trade area by the year 2010.

"The Malta conference is aimed at giving a new boost to the free trade area," said Yves Gazzo, head of the Delegation of the Commission of the European Communities in Jordan Thursday.

The conference will follow on the steps of Barcelona Declaration adopted by the 27 participants with the aim of creating long-term stability based on three pillars: a political and security dialogue that emphasises human rights; economic and financial cooperation; as well as enhancing the link among the people of the region to help foster the values of civil society.

"Malta will focus more on the menu of the three pillars and assess what has been achieved and then draft an agenda," said Mr. Gazzo.

Mr. Gazzo said that since the Barcelona conference, progress has been made in the fight against drugs and crime, adding that Malta will propose a new initiative in the field of human rights and youth related issues.

At the conference, Mr. Gazzo added, the EU will provide its partners with information on changes to the European currency unit (ECU) which, he said, are expected to result in more investments in the region.

The Barcelona conference of November 1995 also called for the establishment of association agreements between countries of the Mediterranean region and the European Union (EU).

Association agreements have been concluded with Morocco, Tunisia, Israel and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). Similar agreements are currently negotiated with Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon and Syria.

Jordan and the EU reached an understanding over outstanding issues of the agreement and the Kingdom was hoping to seal the accord in Malta.

However, Mr. Gazzo said, the problem of third country nationals travelling illegally from Jordan to Europe remains unsolved.

He said that Jordan refused to be held responsible for people sent back from Europe because of the lack of proper travel documents.

"Europe is of course taking Jordan's viewpoint into account, but it is still expecting more attention from Jordan regarding this issue," he said.

Mr. Gazzo said the EU had drafted a text regarding this issue, but the text has not yet been approved by the cabinet.

"Technically, the text has been acceptable by all parties, but we still need a political approval," Mr. Gazzo added.

Since Barcelona, the EU allocated 4.6 billion ECUs (\$5.8 billion) in grants for the Mediterranean countries for the year 1996-1999.

Mr. Gazzo said the EU had committed 100 million ECUs (\$128 million) to support Jordan's balance of payments.

Israel prevents Palestinian pilgrims from travel

RAFAH, Gaza Strip (AFP) — Israel has turned back 37 Palestinians trying to leave the Gaza Strip to make the pilgrimage to Mecca, detaining one person, a Palestinian official said Friday.

Said Sayfan, Palestinian head of security at the Rafah crossing point into Egypt, said Israeli security services prevented the would-be pilgrims from crossing in the past week and sent them back to the self-rule areas.

They also detained Said Zoroub, 44, on suspicion of belonging to the militant Hamas group, Mr. Sayfan said.

Israeli military sources said the Palestinians were suspected of planning to use the Hajj pilgrimage to make contact with Islamic fundamentalist leaders abroad.

One of those turned back was Ahmad Saati, a member of the Islamic National Salvation Party, a political ally of Hamas.

"It's a violation of basic human rights — that of freedom of religious worship," Mr. Saati told AFP.

Israel also arrested a Hamas member, Sheikh Hassan Yousef, as he tried to cross from the West Bank into Jordan on his way to Saudi Arabia earlier this week.

Mr. Yousef's wife said he was ordered detained for four months without trial in Israel.

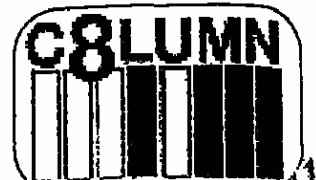
Israel, which controls crossing points between the Palestinian self-rule areas and neighbouring countries, has been on high alert since a Hamas suicide bomber killed himself and three Israeli women at a Tel Aviv cafe on March 21.

Hamas and another group, Islamic Jihad, have called for more anti-Israeli violence in retaliation for the Jewish state's construction of a new settlement in Arab East Jerusalem.

The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) is organising pilgrimage trips aboard Palestinian Airlines, which operates out of Egypt's Al Arish airport, which is the closest Arab airport to the Gaza Strip.

But pilgrims still have to pass through the Israeli checkpoint at Rafah before entering Egypt.

About 18,000 Palestinians were expected to make this year's pilgrimage, but it was not known how many of them will be allowed by Israel to leave the territories.



Transvestite found out after cellmate gets pregnant

ISTANBUL (AFP) — A transvestite detained in the women's ward at a prison in western Turkey was discovered after he got a cellmate pregnant, the daily Hurriyet reported Friday. The paper said Ugur Kilit, sentenced to 15 years in prison for murder, was placed in solitary confinement after prison officials discovered that he was passing himself off as a woman but having sex with five of his fellow inmates. A probe was opened against the prison director and his assistants.

Israeli soldiers pretend to be athletes

TEL AVIV (AFP) — A group of Israeli conscripts, frustrated by a ban on foreign travel, pretended to be members of the national ski team to get permission to go abroad, military sources said Friday. The scam allowed 50 soldiers to leave Israel to take part in imaginary competitions in Switzerland, they said. But military authorities caught on and began investigating the bogus athletes. A travel agent has been arrested in possession of stamps and certificates of a fictitious ski instructors' association. Israelis have to do three years of army national service during which they are not allowed to travel abroad except for a family crisis or as part of an official or sports delegation.

Mitchell finds her long lost daughter

CALGARY (AP) — Singer Joni Mitchell has reunited with her only child, a daughter she gave up for adoption 32 years ago. Mitchell had been searching for the child, now in her early 30s, said Mitchell's father, Bill Anderson. "Apparently her daughter was looking for her, too, so there's sort of a fairy tale ending," Anderson said Wednesday from his home in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. "We've seen pictures and you can see the similarities." Anderson wouldn't identify his granddaughter and a spokesman for Mitchell's record label in Los Angeles said she is "gathering her thoughts to go public." Mitchell, raised in Saskatoon, had the child with Brad McMath, a Toronto photographer. In 1965, Anderson said, Mitchell was an art student at the time. "We really didn't want to get married and settle down," McMath said last December.

Bush remains active George

ROME (AP) — Former President Bush isn't slowing down. He's following up on last week's parachute jump in the Arizona desert with a Toman hot day. Bush, 72, visited Italian Premier Romano Prodi after arriving Thursday. They talked about the violence in Albania, the Middle East peace process and the European Monetary Union, said Prodi's spokesman, Francesco Luna. He also met with Italian President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro and the U.S. Ambassador to Italy, Reginald Bartholomew. Bush was expected to visit Pope John Paul II on Friday at the pontiff's summer residence southeast of Rome. Vatican officials said. Fulfilling a wartime promise to himself, Bush on March 26 jumped from a plane, under a rainbow-coloured parachute.

Report: Uncertainty surrounds Saudi bomb case suspect

NEW YORK (AP) — The Clinton administration does not appear to have enough evidence to prove that a Saudi arrested in Canada played a key role in a bombing last year that killed 19 Americans in Saudi Arabia, the New York Times reported.

The administration is even uncertain whether there is enough evidence to make it worthwhile to bring the man, Hani Abdul Rahim Al Sayegh, 28, to the United States, the Times reported Thursday, quoting senior officials it did not identify.

The uncertainty is complicating the U.S. legal strategy about whether to allow the Canadian government to deport him to the United States, either as a material witness or a suspect in the bombing. Canadian officials told the Times that their government has rebuffed a request by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to interview Sayegh.

Canada will make a decision only after it decides whether Sayegh should be deported as a threat to national security.

"American authorities expressed a desire to interview Mr. Sayegh and this matter is currently being discussed," Gaetan Blais, spokesman for the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), said. "But you also have to understand that his case is still before the court and I would suggest that the final decision will be made after the court proceedings are completed."

A federal judge in Ottawa is to begin hearings on Sayegh's deportation on April 28. Even if Canada allows the United States to have access to Sayegh, he is under no legal obligation to agree to be questioned by American authorities.

Egyptian businessmen shelve trade with Israel in line with league call

CAIRO (AFP) — Egyptian businessmen have put trade with Israel on hold because of the crisis in the peace process, business leaders told the government daily Al Gomhuriya on Friday.

"Egyptian businessmen are implementing Egyptian and Arab policy in relation to Israel," Mohammad Farid Khamis, president of the Egyptian Industrial Union, told the newspaper.

He said their decision had not been dictated by the Egyptian government, a member of the Arab League which on Monday called for a freeze in normalisation with Israel.

"The Egyptian government gave no orders to deal or not deal with Israel, but businessmen operate according to their assessments of the current political situation," he said.

Tuher Al Sherif of the Egyptian Businessmen's Association told Al Gomhuriya: "The decision to go back on trade ties was a response to Israeli policies which don't take into account the rights of the Palestinians."

The Arab League also recommended that member states reactivate a full economic boycott against Israel, to punish it for its construction of a new Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem.

Trade between Israel and Egypt grew only slowly after they signed a peace in 1979, but jumped to \$204 million in the first half of 1996 compared to \$197 million for the whole of 1995.

Malaysians protest against Israeli visitors

KUALA LUMPUR (Agencies) — Malaysian riot police used tear-gas, water cannons and batons on Friday to disperse about 500 demonstrators opposed to the presence of an Israeli cricket team in the country.

The demonstrators from the opposition Malaysia Islamic Party, known by its initials in Malay as PAS, shouted "Crush the Jews" and "Long live Islam" at Malaysia University, where a match between Israel and Argentina was to take place, witnesses said.

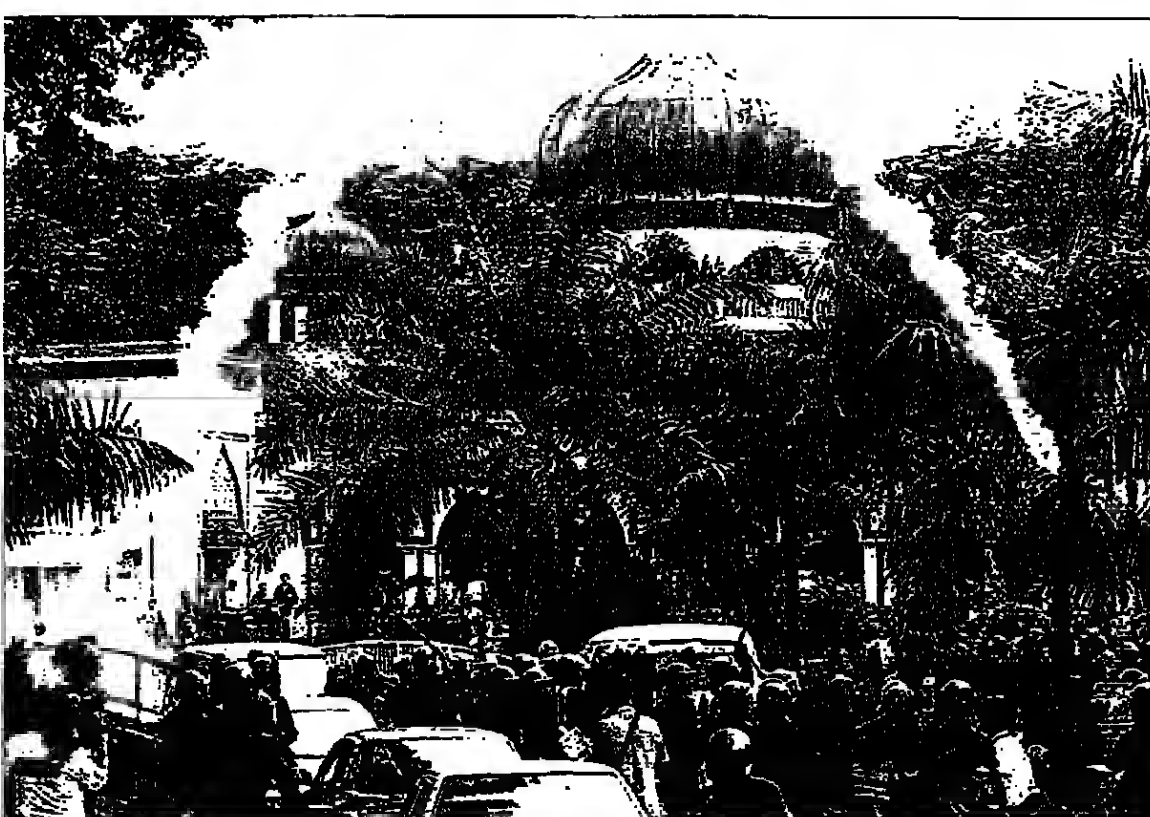
Most of the protesters fled after police in riot gear and two trucks mounted with water cannons moved against them at the university's gates. Others escaped into a nearby mosque.

Chief police officer Ismail Che Ros told reporters 34 people were arrested, but no one was injured. Some 60 to 70 people remained in the mosque, which police have surrounded, he said.

"I will not allow our men to charge into a mosque," Mr. Ismail said. "So we will wait for them to come out. The advantage is on our side."

The match had been moved to another undisclosed venue before the demonstrators arrived.

"We have been polite to them in previous occasions. This time, we gave them four warnings to disperse but they did not heed our



Police fire teargas in to a mosque compound during an anti-Israel demonstration outside of the University of Malaysia on Friday (AFP photo)

warnings," Mr. Ismail said, adding: "We really mean business."

"We have met our objective by stopping the game," said protest leader Sheikh Abu Bakar Omar,

referring to the change of venue. The Israeli cricket team, taking part in the 22-nation International Cricket Council (ICC) trophy tournament, was the first official Israeli

delegation of any sort to visit Malaysia, which does not have diplomatic ties with Israel. Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad said on

Friday the protest was "a stupid act."

"In this country they are lucky they don't get shot when they demonstrate," Mr. Mahathir told reporters in the pas-ruled northern state of Kelantan where he had earlier witnessed the signing of an agreement to build a petrochemicals plant.

"We wanted to show the Israelis that we Muslims are people with intelligent minds. But with this, whatever objective the Israelis had, has been achieved. It is a stupid act," he said.

"This is our opportunity to show them (Israelis) that Muslims in Malaysia can be an example to other Islamic countries and that there is no truth to what the West thinks of us because we don't have such an image," he added.

Friday's protest was the third by pas since the Israeli team arrived in the country two weeks ago.

Last Sunday, about 400 placard-waving PAS protesters stormed a cricket pitch where they thought the Israelis were playing, smashing a billboard and making a bonfire.

The match, between Holland and Canada, was cancelled. ICC organisers, having heard of the impending protest, secretly switched venues around and the match between Israel and Gibraltar took place quietly at another field.